



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



MARCH—APRIL, 2021 ISSUE

Vol 42, No. 2

#1184

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

Chapter Leader:

Eileen Rusky
erusky@gmail.com

Facilitator:

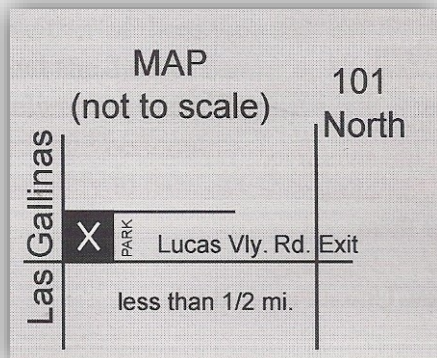
Mark Rosengarden

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.



THE REASON FOR TCF MEETINGS

One could ask, "Why go and listen to the woes of other people when it is easier to get wrapped up in our own?" It is not to compare tragedies, nor assess the right or wrong means of grieving, nor to pressure or complicate or confuse a bereaved parent with timetables of grief. This is not the reasoning behind TCF meetings.

When a child of a family dies, the emotional pain can be intense. It is tempting at times to try to run either into solitude or avoidance. A balance is needed to survive and live more than a resigned existence. Finding a way isn't easy when the "rest of the world" rushes by, taking little notice that our life has changed.

The monthly meeting of The Compassionate Friends is a special time we can set aside to gain and maintain our balance. We need a lot of encouragement to endure and experience our emotions and to express ourselves while grieving. Coming to a meeting can help alleviate the feeling of being alone in sorrow. The environment of other bereaved parents offers a means of keeping in touch with reality, in

Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, March 15, 2021
Monday, April 19, 2021
Monday, May 17, 2021
Monday, June 21, 2021



TCF RESOURCES:

The Compassionate Friends, Marin County 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@hbthb.org
Website: www.hospicebythebay.org

North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael

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

[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org Ph.: 707.721.4062

which there can be a sharing and mutual understanding. There is sustained support knowing that others are willing to acknowledge that though a child's song might be over, the melody of memories will remain woven throughout the remainder of our lives.

N. Hunt
TCF Sioux Falls, SD



Remembrance

I recently attended "A Day of Remembrance" put together by the Alameda County District Attorney's office. The main speaker focused on domestic violence. I had this "oh my" moment when it became clear that domestic violence was a factor when Christopher (my 21 year old son) lost his life.

On March 21, 1996, Christopher was shot four times by his school roommate because he put dishes in the wrong cabinet. A small dispute that should have ended peacefully turned into a senseless murder because of rage. (Since then, I have cautioned many parents to check out and know their children's roommates.)

I always thought about Christopher's death as the crime of murder, which it is. But it's also domestic violence. The legal system had known it all along, but I just caught up...and was stunned that I had not been aware of this angle sooner. It makes sense; now I get it and am asking myself, "what took you so long?"

Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley spoke significant words, along with Mayor Jean Quan, Superior Court Judge Tara Flanagan (awesome) and a very inspiring young woman survivor, Amily He. Amily will make a difference for many people.

Alameda County has been tracking all the domestic violence deaths since 1996. 1996 is the year Christopher was murdered and was one of 20 deaths. In 2010 there were 3 deaths, 2011 another 4 deaths and 2012 there were 10. Since 1996 all the domestic violence numbers (deaths) have gone down. I am grateful to see this change, and I am sure many others are, too. It was very apparent to me at the event who was newly bereaved and who was practiced. I deliberately sat next to a freshly grieving woman who has lost her sister recently. She could barely speak through her tears. I had my hand on her shoulder, and I just kept thinking "I am going to pour my love into her and hope it helps a tiny bit." There were photos on a table of everyone's loved one and we pointed each other's out and said their names. She knew she was safe with me and didn't have to pretend.

I found myself being so grateful for the years that have passed. Fresh raw traumatic grief is very hard to absorb. It won't let you up for air and you cannot imagine ever being happy again. I don't miss Christopher less. I am just calm.

Rhada Stern, TCF Marin



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. Please visit my newly updated website at www.carolKearns.com. - Carol

The Dance of Life and Death

I just became a grandmother for the first time. Early Saturday morning our son called to say his wife was in the hospital with labor pains that were five minutes apart. After calling the airlines, my husband and I darted for the airport to catch the next flight to San Diego. While joyfully awaiting our flight we received a message that one of our dear friends was nearing death after a long battle with ovarian cancer. We were completely unprepared for the immediate flood of contrasting feelings: Devastation over hearing we would never see our friend again collided head on with the ecstasy we had felt only moments before.

The mysterious weaving of life and death...a tapestry none of us can fully understand. Our friend had battled cancer with a dignity and strength we all admired. She had also just become a new grandmother with a little grandson that made her world complete whenever she held him. She had set a goal to be at her daughter's wedding this summer. She was experiencing life's great joys when her life ended.

I thought about Isabel Allende's words in her beautiful book, "Paula", as she prepared her daughter's body after death, gently washing and anointing her while at the same time welcoming her new granddaughter into the world. When I first read her book, I was fascinated by her insight into these seemingly contrasting situations. She didn't see it that way. "We celebrated the gifts [Paula] had given us in life, and all of us said goodbye and prayed in our own way. As the hours went by, something solemn and sacred filled the room, just as on the occasion of Andrea's (the granddaughter's) birth. The two moments are much alike: birth and death are made of the same fabric. The air became more and

more still; we moved slowly, in order not to disturb our hearts' response. We were filled with Paula's spirit, as if we were all one being and there was no separation among us: life and death were joined. For a few hours, we experienced that reality the soul knows, absent time or space."

Many of us were in a joyful time of life before our own child died. A new promotion, a son accepted into the college of his choice, a fun family vacation, new home or recent graduation - events like these were in full swing, and then our child was taken from us. I was in the midst of an exhilarating children's weekend that had been planned for two months with my friends and their children when my daughter Kristen was swept out to sea. The intensity of our joy only moments before was washed away by an intense sorrow. How could that happen?

As I look into my newborn grandson's eyes I can't help but wonder what life will ask of him. I know he will experience both pain and happiness, for that is what life is about. I know that at times, these emotions may also collide for him as they did for us. We can not always protect him. I only hope that with our love we can give him the courage and confidence not to fear but instead to grow from these holy mysteries of life.

I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
For grief is proud and makes his owner stoop
To me and to the state of my great grief
Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great
That no supporter but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up: here I and sorrows sit;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.

--Shakespeare, King John, Act III

Lancelot Argall
 Kristen Leigh Bonocore
 Christopher Abram Bruce
 Brian Jay Buckley
 Tony Burger
 Aura Celeste
 Damon Clark
 Taylor Lynn Cohen
 Travis William Cole
 Oksana Collins
 Matthew Jason Comin
 Bodi Cooper Ealey
 John Patrick Feeney
 Neel Thomas Foon
 "Ryan" Stephan Fyles
 René Francesca Garcia
 William Turner Gundry
 Ellen Marian Haas
 Jessica Marie Hildreth
 Mark Hornor
 Christopher Robin Hotchkiss
 Matthew David Hubal
 Ian Emerson Jones
 Gabriel Michael Kerekes
 Patrick Alan Kolsky
 Natalie Jane Kriebel
 Alicia Scott Lee
 Maximillian Letizi
 Erin Kathryn McEowen
 Alia Rose Jackson Mehta
 Christopher J. Murphy, Jr.
 Amanda Jacqueline Noland
 Emily Grace Panicacci
 Phillip E. Perry
 Carolyn Reichling
 James Aaron Rosengarden
 Lara Rachel Rusky
 Dennis Howard Schonborn
 Caleb Kalani Sears
 David Paul Seregin
 Matthew Paul Seregin
 Flennis Anthony Simón II
 Julian Ali Thomas
 Elizabeth Torlakson
 Eloi Ivan Vasquez-Margolin

Grier Argall & Jeanni Lang
 Joseph & Phyllis Bonocore
 Mike & Louise Bruce
 Merilee Rossi, Chris Valentino & Family
 Bob & Darlene Burger
 Joshua Nagler
 Susan Radelt
 Michael & Gail Cohen
 Kingston Cole
 Susan Collins
 Marci & Mark Comin Comin
 Sarah Ealey, Eli Echelmeier
 Lois & Dan Feeney
 Brad & Genie Foon
 Susan & Dale Fyles
 Bertlla, Carmen & Jose Armando Garcia
 Karen Gundry Smith & Frank Gundry
 Harold & Mary Haas
 Julie & Ed Taylor
 Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
 Radha Stern
 Bruce & Louise Hubal
 Nanette Biers
 Martie Jean
 Alan & Linda Kolsky
 John Kriebel, Amy Holle
 Jon & Cathie Lee
 Anthony & Terry Letizi
 Sandy & Jerry McEowen
 Gail & Roy Jackson
 Tina Smith
 Cecile & Doug Noland
 Scott & Jennifer Panicacci
 Sue Hecht
 Michelle Miller
 Mark Rosengarden
 Edward & Eileen Rusky
 Felicia Schonborn
 Tim & Eliza Sears, Ann Bentley
 Sonya & Paul Seregin
 Sonya & Paul Seregin
 Donna & Flennis Simón
 Fariba Thomas
 Kathy Bodnar
 Wendy Margolin

To Start a New Year

If I can concentrate on the
 moral and spiritual side of
 the holidays
 I can make it through.

If I can absorb the love and
 warmth that was the

beginning
 I can give love back.

If I can share the grief and
 love that is in me
 through these holidays
 I can start a new year.

Tom Spray
 TCF Ventura, CA

Our Children Remembered, April, 2021

<i>Child</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Bereaved</i>
Jonathan Adkisson, Jr.		Anne & Jonathan Adkisson
Eric Tyler Anderson		Bill & Liz Anderson
Barbara Ann Balesteri		Mary Balesteri, Harry & Josie Ewing
Meredith Kathryn Emma Bates		Laura & John Pattillo
Sylvia Chantal Bingham		Francoise Blusseau & Stephen Bingham
Sean Stephen Bourke		Beryl Bourke
Laura Alicia Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Seána Canavan		Tonia & Sean Canavan
Matthew D. Cevallos		Moe & Gloria Cevallos
Blake Coffman		Ellen & Fred Coffman
Kevin C. Craft		Debbie & Curtis Craft
Bradley Leroy Epperson		Kristine Epperson
Jacob Samuel Freeman		Michael Freeman & Lisa Klairmont
Jessica Marie Hildreth		Julie & Ed Taylor
Alexandra Hopping		Mark & Kathryn Hopping
Charli Mae James		Samuel Davis-Flake
Kristen Michele Kearns		Dr. Carol Kearns
Joanne Rae Kline		Donna & Sylvan Kline
Ryan W. McKnight		Bob & Leesa Tuley
Peter McLaughlin		Eve Pell
Sean Michael Morgan, Jr.		Sean & Claire Morgan
Anthony Dino Nay		Bob & Diana Nay
Kevin Connor Olaeta		Lonnie Olaeta
Anthony Joseph Rios		Barb Curtice
Steven Rodriguez		Rafael & Alex Rodriguez
Carrie Jean Esler Rollison		Judith Esler
Benjamin Rosenthal		Robert Rosenthal
Anthony Salvatore Santa Maria		Pam Santa Maria
Benjamin P. Scheuenstuhl		Maureen & Heinz Scheuenstuhl
Ellen Alexandra Scott		Carol Scott
David Paul Seregin		Sonya & Paul Seregin
Matthew Paul Seregin		Sonya & Paul Seregin
Marc Paul Seregin		Sonya & Paul Seregin
Robbie Severdia		Deedee Severdia
Zackary Spencer Stuart		Michelle Stuart
Meghan Rae Teresi		James Teresi & Lynda Cardwell
Karl Ingemar Thunstrom		Avghi & Bert Thunstrom
Aurora Alice Turnbaugh		Sandra Maxwell & Kevin Turnbaugh
Jesse R. Venegas		Brent R. Venegas
John Elliot Vipiana		Lisa Vipiana, John Vipiana
Phoebe Stewart Washer		Drew Washer, David Washer
Brittney Marie Weaver		Janine Schengel
Craig Weldon		Lee Weldon
Brekhus Alan Williams		Catherine & Scott Williams

When

When your mind
cannot find
an answer,
open your heart
and ask
for peace.

Sascha Wagner
© The Compassionate Friends

Whose is this cherub smile
that on the mantel rests –
forever silent lips
and eyes of brown?
I knew him once
too short a time
a lifetime ago.

Excerpt from "A Lifetime Ago"
by Heinz Scheuenstuhl, 2009 TCF Marin

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.

The following love gift was received too late for the January/ February newsletter.

Donor/s: Daly & David Schreck
Child: Colin Edward Schreck
Dates:

"We love you always - you live within us forever, Colin. Mother & Dad, Chris, Lesley & Ireland, Ireland David & Michaelanne Daly"

The following love gifts were received for March and April.

Donor/s: Sandy & Bill Mixsell
Child: Brian Mixsell
Dates:

"Best son ever. We miss you."

Donor/s: Joan Ross
Child: David Arthur Ross
Dates:

"Dearest David, my birthday son. Your spirit is with us always and your love."

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

Donor/s: Rob Jacobs
Child: Stefanie Jacobs
Dates:

"In loving memory of my dear daughter Stefanie. Love and miss you every day. Love, Dad."

Donor/s: Alan & Virginia Pabst

Donor/s: Aleksandr Dvorkin

KRISTEN'S BIRTHDAY

This day that was
Has come and gone.
In its place a tree grows strong.
Its leafy arms gracefully sway
As gentle breezes through them play.
The sun beams down,
It's warmth to give...
And the rains, the will to live.
So it is, and life goes on.
A tree now stands where this day has gone.

Grandma Michel
April 19, 1977

Written after Kristen's tree planting ceremony
On her birthday at Helman School, Ashland,
Oregon

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.

On the Horizon

It has been so good to get back to the high school and start preparing for the new school year. The experience always brings with it a feeling of renewal and hope for what the year holds. But the week has also brought with it a range of strong, mixed, and surprising emotions.

Our professional development meeting on Wednesday was the first time I have had to publicly introduce myself and talk about my family since we lost Tom. I guess I knew this situation would come up at some point, but I had not given any thought to how to handle it or how I might react. While fighting to hold back tears, I simply said, "My family consists of my husband, L.J., and my two sons, Tim and Tom. Tim will be a senior at EWU this year." I did not have to say anything more about Tom, because of course, all of the faculty present (except for a few newbies) know the rest of the details. Fortunately, I was able to wait until the next break to fall apart instead of crying in front of my whole group. The experience made me realize I have to figure out how to deal with this type of situation. Tom will always be my son, and I will always want to acknowledge that. So finding a graceful way of doing so without losing emotional control and without making others uncomfortable is something I am going to have to work on. How bizarre that what was once so easy to talk about now is something I have to plan an approach to.

Yesterday during a break on our second day of professional development, I felt moved to tell one of Tom's teachers, that Tom appreciated and respected him and enjoyed his class. I had held it together well for most of the day, but at that moment, I lost it. This man, with whom I have never really spoken before, physically embraced me and told me how much he enjoyed having both my boys as students. It was such a generous and gracious gesture which moves me to tears again as I share it.

Late yesterday, while prepping for my first week of class, I found an assignment Tom completed when he was a student of mine a few years ago. It was so good to see his handwriting and read his words which so beautifully reflect his personality. But then the waterworks started, and they were the heaviest they have been in a while. It was the uncontrollable, trying to catch my breath, sobbing wails of unfathomable loss. Those jags are incredibly draining physically and emotionally, leading to sinuses so swollen that yesterday I could not get the spray decongestant applicator into my nose.

One of my friends pointed out Prosser High School holds an affiliation for me beyond my teaching job because it is where Tom spent so much of his time. She reassured me it makes perfect sense I am struggling,

having so many shared experiences there with him. She helped me understand the institution and this group of amazing people who so selflessly propped me up during my first few months of loss, represent a huge piece of Tom as well. I was so very grateful for her gentle guidance to that perspective.

Her encouragement led me to reflect upon the patience and grace others continue to show me. They reference the impact my writing is having. They smile at and hug me. They listen intently when I tell stories about Tom. They quietly hand me tissues to blow my nose and wipe the tears away. They tell me it is good to see me instead of asking how I am. They hold my hands and tell me we can cry together. They tell me they love me. This tragedy has brought so many amazing, generous, and caring people into my life. It has created a network of friends with whom I likely would have never connected at this level. L.J. and I used to consider picking up and moving elsewhere when the boys graduated from high school. Now I cannot imagine ever leaving here. How ironic my most tremendous life loss has brought with it such amazing gifts as well.

I must admit, however, in addition to the emotional lows and the occasional moments of uplifting joy and hope, a new emotion is rising in my heart. Fear.

I fear Tom will be forgotten by his friends as they move on in life, and they will not remember his sense of humor, his willingness to help others, his intelligence, his smile, or the sound of his voice.

And I fear as I continue to grieve and heal, people will forget my feelings of loss. I fear folks will stop sending me pictures they stumble upon of him or telling me stories of his helpfulness or generosity. I fear people will stop remembering I lost a piece of myself when he died and start to lose patience when I fall apart at things which seem insignificant. I fear the cards, emails, FB posts, and texts will fade away. I fear people's grace will wain when the sadness behind my eyes and smile is not quite so pronounced, and they see me occasionally but wholeheartedly smiling or laughing.

Every day still brings tears to my eyes. But some days also now bring joy. One does not strip the other away. Please do not forget my son or how losing him has forever changed me.

Kimberly Starr
TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide Group
In Memory of my son Tom





The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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

MAR—APR, 2021

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Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly



A Painless Way to Support our TCF Chapter

TCF Marin survives largely on generous love gifts throughout the year and at the Candle Lighting Ceremony in December. But there is another way to support TCF-MC that is easy and painless. That is, whenever you purchase something from Amazon, if you do so through Amazon Smile, .5% of the purchase price of selected items will be sent to TCF-MC automatically.

It's easy, it places no additional economic burden on you or your family and, when enough of us participate, it will add up and TCF-MC will be stronger and be able to provide more services.

It's simple. Here's how to do it.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply (1) go to smile.amazon.com. (If you have one, you can use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List and other account settings are also the same.) (2) On your first visit to AmazonSmile, smile.amazon.com, (3) just select TCF-MC to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. AmazonSmile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation. Eligible products are marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on their product detail pages.

