



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



July—August, 2021 ISSUE

Vol 42, No. 4

#1184

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

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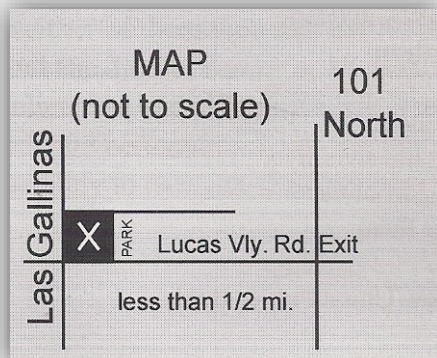
Mark Rosengarden

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. Please know that we ARE here to help you in your times of need. Please reach out to us by email at tcfmarin@gmail.com or check our website for more up to date contact information. Monthly meetings are being presented online via ZOOM. Please watch your email for meeting announcements.

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.



A Native American Lesson in Grief

One of the most common questions that family and friends ask is how long does it take to "get over" the death of a loved one. Native American culture holds many lessons about grief and its duration. The Native American legend of the Caterpillar people holds lessons for us all in grief. This legend is traditionally told during funeral services of the Shoshone.

"Long ago, there were two caterpillar people who loved each other very much. When the caterpillar man died the caterpillar woman was overcome by her grief. In her remorse she withdrew into herself and pulled her sorrow around her like a shawl. She walked and mourned for a year and because the world is a circle she ended up where she had started. The Creator looked down upon her and told her that she had suffered too long. 'Now,' he told her, 'is the time for you to step into a new world of beauty.' He clapped his hands and the caterpillar woman burst forth as a butterfly. Her world was now full of beauty and color." *

Many Native American tribes see the butterfly as a symbol of everlasting life. The Wilik-wilik waashaashut or the Butterfly Dance enacts this legend. Young women line up single file and pull their shawls over their heads to cover them. This represents the caterpillar in the cocoon. The

Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, July 19, 2021
Monday, August 16, 2021
Monday, September 20, 2021
Monday, October 18, 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

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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

drummers sing and drum sadly. After the head dancer returns where she begun the dancers open their arms and display the brightly colored shawls. The song becomes more upbeat and the women dance to represent the fluttering of the wings.

Another saying of the Warm Spring Native American tribe is to compare the death of a loved one to a landslide. "When your road is blocked by a landslide, you clear it by taking away one rock at a time." In a time, when we want definite answers or a quick fix we should heed the wisdom these legends impart and let us work through grief at our own pace.

Trudy Weathersby, RN, M.Ed.

Trudy Weathersby, RN, M.Ed. is an active licensed Registered Nurse and the Death and Dying Online Guide for about.com at <http://dying.about.com/health/dying/mbody.htm>

* Reference: Tafoya, Terry, "The Widow as Butterfly, Innovative Approaches for Bereavement Based on Native American Tradition," *The Director*, February, 1998

Broken Heart Syndrome

One afternoon, I was channel surfing looking for something to watch when I came across the Oprah Winfrey Channel. She was interviewing a woman named Madonna Badger. On Christmas Day, 2011, Madonna's 7 year old twins, a boy and a girl, her 9 year old daughter and her parents all died in a horrific house fire. She spoke of the unrelenting grief and sorrow she has suffered in the years since. I was riveted to the television screen as she recanted her story. As she talked, she coined a phrase that I had never heard of before to describe her pain, "Broken Heart Syndrome." It is a temporary condition that is brought on by extreme stressful situations, such as the death of someone deeply loved.

I thought, finally there is a label for the intense pain and suffering that those who grieve feel! Broken Heart Syndrome is an identifiable condition brought on by stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one. Broken Heart Syndrome is also called *takotsubo cardiomyopathy*. Broken Heart Syndrome manifests as a temporary disruption of the heart's normal pumping function or with even more forceful contractions, while the remainder of the heart functions normally. Symptoms can include chest pain and shortness of breath. It effects more women than men. It is attributed to a reaction to a surge of stress hormones.

After my daughter died, I suffered with intense bouts of pain on the outer left muscular wall of my upper torso. An EKG revealed no abnormalities. Seven years later, I still never know when this pain might reoccur. I have however connected my episodes with certain stressors, such as; my child's birth and death dates, holidays and special occasions.

Although doctors are just now learning about this condition, the good news is that broken heart syndrome is treatable and the discomfort should abate with time. If you think you might be suffering from broken heart syndrome, you should discuss it with you physician.



Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

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

PTSD and the Bereaved Parent

I was once asked by a bereaved parent if the death of a child can cause PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder). My answer was, "ABSOLUTELY!" The essential feature of this disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor. What could be more extreme for parents than the death of their child? This is the greatest nightmare of any parent.

In this article I will identify the criteria needed to make this diagnosis and in the next newsletter, I will address ways parents can be helped. For grieving parents, PTSD can be especially severe when the death of their child was of human design, as in murder or suicide. This disorder can occur at any age including childhood and can develop in individuals without any predisposing conditions.

The bible for mental health clinicians is the DSM-IV. The criteria that validate this diagnosis in a bereaved parent are:

- A: (1) The death of one's child as experienced by the parent is considered a traumatic event and (2) due to the death, the parent has experienced intense fear, helplessness, or horror. In children this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.
- B: The trauma of the death is persistently re-experienced in one (or more) of the following ways: (1) Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event. In young children, repetitive play may occur where themes or aspects of the death are acted out. (2) Distressing dreams and with children this may occur without recognizable content. (3) Flashbacks of the event including a sense of reliving the experience. (4) Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that resemble the death. (5) Physiological reactivity when exposed to these cues.
- C: Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and a general numbing of responsiveness that wasn't

experienced before the child's death that includes three or more of the following: (1) Avoidance of thoughts, feelings or conversations associated with death. (2) Avoidance of activities, places or people associated. (3) Inability to recall an important aspect of the death. (4) Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities. (5) Feelings of detachment or estrangement (6) A restricted range of affect (e.g. unable to have loving feelings). (7) A sense of a foreshortened future.

- D: Persistent symptoms of increased arousal that includes two or more of the following: (1) Sleep difficulties. (2) Irritability or anger outbursts. (3) Difficulty concentrating. (4) Hypervigilance. (5) Exaggerated startle response.
- E: Duration of the disturbances in B, C, and D last more than one month.
- F: The disturbances cause significant distress in areas of functioning from social to career.

As Long As I Can

As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing
with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on
this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as long as I can.

Sascha Wagner
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"We never truly "get over" a loss, but we can move forward and evolve from it."
— Elizabeth Berrien, Creative Grieving: A Hip Chick's Path from Loss to Hope



Our Children Remembered

July

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
David Riley Crook		Ronald & Joan Crook
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

“We do not have control over many things in life and death,
but we do have control over the meaning we give it.”
— Nathalie Himmelrich, *Grieving Parents: Surviving Loss as a Couple*



Our Children Remembered

August

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		Elizaberth 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		David Washer, Drew Washer
Max S. Jackson Weinreb		Beth Jackson & Marion Weinreb
Gabriel Alexander Whooley		Monica Whooley
Nathan Hall Wright		Elizabeth Wright

When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares. *-Henri Nouwen*

At some of the darkest moments in my life, some people I thought of as friends deserted me-some because they cared about me and it hurt them to see me in pain; others because I reminded them of their own vulnerability, and that was more than they could handle. But real friends overcame their discomfort and came to sit with me. If they had not words to make me feel better, they sat in silence (much better than saying, "You'll get over it," or "It's not so bad; others have it worse") and I loved them for it. *- Harold Kushner, Living a Life that Matters*

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 May/ June newsletter.

Donor/s: Brenda Bloomfield & Samuel Martinez
Child: Marco Antonio Joseph Martinez
Dates:

"We love you MarMar and miss you beyond what words can express."

The following love gift was received for July and August.

Donor/s: Mark Comin & Marci Rinkoff
Child: Matthew Comin
Dates:

"Matt, we are missing and loving you every day. You bring a smile to our faces often as we hear your wonderful laughter in our minds. With love, Dad."

In addition, a donation and grant were received from Merilee Rossi and the Rossi Family Foundation for the Georgia Alioto Memorial fund to develop our leadership group and provide conference support.

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

IT'S OKAY

It's Okay to Grieve:

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.

It's Okay to Cry:

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to "level off" and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to Heal:

We do not need to "prove" we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel "guilty," for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to Laugh:

Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Marianne Waite
TCF El Paso, TX

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.

A Box of Coins

My husband Bruce and my stepdaughter Jess drove to our son's apartment to retrieve his things shortly after his death. They returned with clothing, bed linens, lots of CD's, his backpack, and a computer desk that he and I assembled together at his new apartment. They brought back the computer, kitchen items, and a New Balance shoebox.

I recognized the box. We gave him shoes as a parting gift as he left for college that fall. His college expenses stressed our budget. I second guessed most purchases but not the shoes. He needed them. I wondered why he had kept the box.

It was filled with coins and a red cup. Jess said the cup had been on his desk. Apparently at day's end our son Art emptied his pockets of loose change into the cup. Eventually Arthur poured the contents of the cup into the shoebox. The boy had a savings plan.

I saved the box of coins. I could not toss them into a change counter. He had touched each one. I stored the box under a bed that he had used as a youngster.

After four years, I pulled out the box and spent a quiet evening counting coins. \$74.14. I wrote a note from Art to an anticipated nephew or niece that he would never met and slipped it in the box. "Use these coins for college." From Art.

The box slid under the bed again. I would find the right place for those coins—maybe a charity, maybe the scholarship initiated in memory of Arthur. Not now.

Last month Jess called me with a funny story about her toddler son, my first grandchild. Jess and Brandon had taught their young son to drop coins into a big red piggybank. They were scrounging for coins because their son liked the game so much.

Perfect! Those shoebox coins just found a new home! That weekend I delivered the box of coins to them. The next time I babysat, I pulled a few coins from the shoebox and handed them to my grandson, one by one. Mason giggled as he touched each one and dropped it squarely into the piggybank. We both smiled at each other.

The boy has a savings plan. Must be genetic!

I am grateful for the gift of time with my son's possessions. TCF monthly meetings taught me to be patient with myself until I found my new balance. It took almost seven years. I gave away my son's coins with no regrets.

Monica Colberg

TCF Minneapolis, MN / In Memory of my son Art



First Anniversary

When a bolt of lightning took the life of my son, Curtis, my life changed forever. The first winter after the loss was the darkest period of my life. In my misery I'd often daydream of sitting on a warm, sandy beach, watching the waves roll in. I believed this might bring some peace to my aching heart.

At last, winter turned to spring and then summer. For many weeks I dreaded the coming of the first anniversary, July 24th, but knew I wanted to spend the day by the water. My husband and I made plans to travel to Bayfield County, Wisconsin. The 24th was a beautiful, sunny day when we arrived on the shores of Lake Superior. As we set up our chairs in a shady spot on the beach, we looked around at the many families surrounding us. Parents were relaxing as their children played in the sand and water. Tears ran down our cheeks as we watched and remembered Curt and his sister, Pam, doing the same thing as youngsters. The memories were hard to bear—this wasn't the soothing, peace-filled day that I had hoped for. As we left the beach, I wondered if people noticed my tear-streaked face. The next evening we traveled to a different, more secluded beach. The sun setting over the water was a beautiful sight, and the photo I took is one I love to look at, especially in the cold winter months.

Bayfield County is known for its many orchards. The sweet cherries and blueberries were ready for picking, so we decided to take advantage of the opportunity. For several hours we worked side by side, first picking the cherries from low-hanging branches, and then kneeling to pick the loaded blueberry bushes. We talked as we worked, occasionally sampling the delicious fruit, and surprisingly, even laughing. For short periods of time we were able to put aside the sadness and enjoy the moment. When we arrived back home, the "anniversary" cards and messages waiting for us from thoughtful friends touched our hearts. We took great pleasure in sharing our fruit with family and friends.

As the 4th anniversary of Curt's passing approaches, I look back and see the progress I've made. The grief process is exasperatingly slow. Healing doesn't magically happen with the passage of time, but requires lots of hard work and patience. My journey through grief continues, and sometimes I question if it will ever end. However, I do know that the crushing sorrow I once felt no longer rules my life. I've done what I thought was impossible—I've survived the loss of my precious son and have become a more caring, compassionate person because of it. I know that I must live for today, appreciating the beauty and surprises that each day brings. I will do the best I can because this is what my son would want.

Ruth Ann Meyer

TCF Greater Antigo Area, WI
In loving memory of my son, Curtis

"It is okay to release your feelings when you feel the waves coming. It's all part of the process of having to let go of your relationship with your loved one as you once knew it. And remember, letting go is not the same thing as forgetting!"

— **Elizabeth Berrien**, *Creative Grieving: A Hip Chick's Path from Loss to Hope*



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

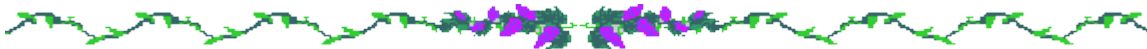
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The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter
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JUL—AUG, 2021

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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.

