



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Marin County Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

**November—December, 2021 ISSUE**

Vol 42, No. 6

#1184



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

#### **Chapter Leader:**

Eileen Rusky  
erusky@gmail.com

#### **Facilitator:**

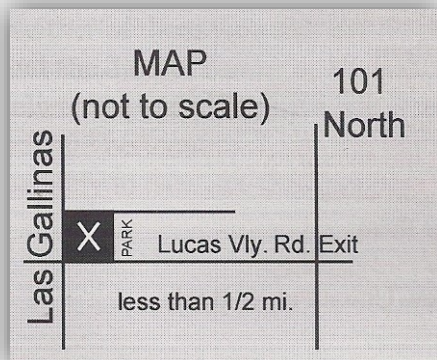
Mark Rosengarden

#### **TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:**

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.



#### **FORWORD to this edition and note from the editor:**

We are once again holding our usual monthly support meetings at the Hillside Church in Terra Linda. Attendees must show proof of Covid-19 vaccination and a picture ID. Facemasks are required.

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.



This year's candle lighting will be held via Zoom, like last year.

See page 2 for details and the link address. There will be an email announcement early December.

#### **Meeting Calendar**

##### **Third Monday of the Month:**

Monday, September 20, 2021  
Monday, October 18, 2021  
Monday, November 15, 2021  
Monday, December 20, 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](mailto:cwhallum1@mac.com)  
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

### *TCF Sonoma County Chapter*

[tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com](mailto:tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com)  
(707) 490-8640

### *Northern CA Regional Coordinator:*

Nancy Juracka  
[nancy\\_juracka@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### *Additional Support Sites*

[opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)  
[survivorsofselfharm.com](http://survivorsofselfharm.com)  
[griefspeaks.com](http://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](mailto:griefsupport@hbtb.org)  
Website: [www.hospicebythebay.org](http://www.hospicebythebay.org)

### *North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael*

[www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com](http://www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com)  
Ph.: 415-250-3027

### [LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

### *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) Ph.: 707.721.4062

## On a Night in December

As days moved on towards winter,  
and trees were going bare,  
we were faced with shopping malls  
where carols filled the air.

And thoughts all turned to loved ones,  
those present, and those not.  
For us, whose lives were drained of light,  
it was solace that we sought.

And so began a journey  
of candles round the earth  
bringing light to darkness  
and honoring the worth

of children held so dear to us  
but never to grow old,  
whose lives filled our life tapestries,  
with threads of finest gold.

Now we gather on this night  
and watch the candles burn  
see their pictures, say their names  
one by one, in turn.

And our children, brothers, sisters,  
for whom we gather here,  
let us know, in the candles glow,  
that they are always near.

Their light will still surround us;  
their love will always flow.  
As we leave may we remember,  
that this is ever so.

From: Catching the Light –  
Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child  
by Genesee Bourdeau Gentry  
Written for TCF Marin's  
2003 Candle Lighting Service



Eileen Rusky is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting:

Topic: 2021 **Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony**  
Time: Dec 12, 2021 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5096940475?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5096940475?pwd=UXFwTkdwZW50ZWxtOXp0bDNreHNPZz09)  
[pwd=UXFwTkdwZW50ZWxtOXp0bDNreHNPZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5096940475?pwd=UXFwTkdwZW50ZWxtOXp0bDNreHNPZz09)

Meeting ID: 509 694 0475  
Passcode: 4k452f

If you would like your child to be included in our "Children's Memorial Video" please send a digital photo to:

Radha Stern: [radha-stern@msn.com](mailto:radha-stern@msn.com)

All photos must be to me by November 22, 2021. A high resolution jpeg is the best. Please include your child's name, birth and death dates. Please put "Candle Lighting" on the subject line of the email. I will let you know I received the photo.

## 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](http://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](http://www.carolKearns.com). - Carol

### Not So Unusual After All

The Dreams and Unusual Happenings workshop, sponsored by Georgia Alioto and her husband for our local Compassionate Friends chapter, was a great success. We all felt this even before reading the enthusiastic evaluations from workshop participants. The Aliotos welcomed us into their home and Georgia provided one of her memorable lunches before the sharing began. As each of us introduced ourselves and began to tell our stories, we discovered that our experiences before and after our children's deaths were not so unusual after all. This was the first opportunity for many to share these events in a group setting.

Many told of visits from their children after their deaths, either in dreams or in waking consciousness. One mother had two visits from her son in which she saw him and heard him speak. Another mother shared her skepticism about whether an after-life exists but said she had so many experiences with her son since his death that she is now not sure what to think. A father described hearing his daughter call his name one night when he was alone and overwhelmed with sadness. This same father told of another time when he heard his daughter laughing while he visited her gravesite. Both events were a great comfort to him. This echoed my own experience after my daughter Kristen's death. I was lying in bed one night feeling very sad, discouraged and unable to fall asleep. In the stillness of the night, I heard my name two distinctly different times that were only seconds apart. The voice didn't sound like Kristen, but I knew it was either her or another spirit letting me know that I wasn't alone. Consoled, I peacefully rolled over and fell asleep.

I was especially moved when Alan Kolsky described his closeness to our children whenever he works on the videos for the annual candle-lighting ceremonies. Alan said he is at a loss to explain how these things sometimes happen, but he believes that the children themselves have a hand in what they want the result to be. He has found that if they don't like his choice of music or scene, then it simply doesn't work. One time prior to the candle-lighting, when he had almost completed the video, his computer systems completely shut down. Alan panicked because he was running out of time and could not figure out what was wrong. Just as mysteriously, the video machine then started up again. Later he discovered that he had mixed up two of the children's pictures. He now thinks that the children had a hand in this, giving him one last chance to get it right before the ceremony. No wonder the videos are so beautiful. Alan and our children are all in this together!

The importance of sharing these experiences is the confirmation we get (and need) that our children are okay and at peace in an after-life. Most parents can feel at peace themselves once they are reassured of this. Bereaved parents who share in this way are a great comfort to each other.



#### KRISTEN, IN MEMORY OF YOU NOVEMBER 13, 1978

She came, and the rainbows were her child's fantasy,  
And the flowers her gifts of love.  
She dreamed of womanhood with gowns and scarves,  
Perfumes and jewelry.  
Yet she was pure child and belied the guise.  
She left, and the rainbows became her presence,  
And the flowers held still her love.

She's gone as child, and the woman rests as the dream.,  
Yet her essence stays close,  
Meaning strong beyond body and time.  
She remains.

Love, Bob



# Our Children Remembered

## November

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Alana Teresa Alioto		John Alioto
Bret William Baumgarten		Bobbi & Dan Baumgarten
Kristen Leigh Bonocore		Joseph & Phyllis Bonocore
Jonathan Eugene Brilliant		Girija & Larry Brilliant
Joey Burger		Bob & Darlene Burger
Max Hart Chappell		Jeanne Vukasovich
Jason Paul Ewing		Harry & Josie Ewing
René Garcia		Bertila, Carmen & Jose Armando Garcia
Vincent Alfred Hinds		Henry & Ginny Hinds
Rodrigues Julian		Connie Rodrigues
Kristen Michele Kearns		Dr. Carol Kearns
Gabriel Michael Kerekes		Martie Jean
Trey Lagomarsino		Mike Baxman & Susan Kim
Evan Porter Larsen		Libby McQuiston
Trevor London Leopold		Michelle & Jeff Leopold
John Francis Lino		George & Marianne Lino
Michael J. Lockwood		Barbara Lockwood Albertoni
Alia Rose Jackson Mehta		Gail & Roy Jackson
Jakob Montoya		Michelle Padilla-Goode
Kayden Montoya		Michelle Padilla-Goode
Amanda Jacqueline Noland		Cecile & Doug Noland
Katie Okura		Ginny Anderson
Rebecca E. Pabst		Alan & Virginia Pabst
Alexander Rayburn		Mindee & Steve Rayburn
Carrie Jean Esler Rollison		Judith Esler
Nevra Rubenstein		Janet & Zev Rubenstein
Susan Rudolph		Jackie Martin
Marc Paul Seregin		Sonya & Paul Seregin
Cary Warren Smith		Patsy Curry
Jess Stringer		Judy Stringer
Robert Craig Wilson		Mary C. Fishman
<b>The Long Forever</b>  You left us so quickly; there were no goodbyes. How long this forever, your death and our lives.		The sadness, the anger, the loneliness of three, preferring four always, how small, this new we.  Genesee Bourdeau Gentry From <i>Stars in the Deepest Night—After the Death of a Child</i>

# Our Children Remembered

## December

Child	Dates	Bereaved
John Charles Berges		Mary Berges
Stephen Anthony Castaldo		Joanne Castaldo
Matthew David Cevallos		Moe & Gloria Cevallos
Blake Coffman		Ellen & Fred Coffman
Travis William Cole		Kingston Cole
Matthew Corral		Karen Corral
Chelsea Faith Dolan		Colleen Dolan
Michael Anthony Dollwet		Ronald & Joan Crook
Bradley Leroy Epperson		Kristine Epperson
Errol Friedman		Jeff & Barbara Friedman
Charli Mae James		Samuel Davis-Flake
Bowen Kader Johnson		Julie & Brian Gordon
John Nicholas Klingel		John & Karen Klingel
Natalie Jane Kriebel		Amy Holle, John Kriebel
James Scott Lambert		Linda Hicken
Ruth Dasha Goldie Levy		Shary Levy, Arthur Levy
Albert Arthur Levy		Shary Levy, Arthur Levy
John Francis Lino		George & Marianne Lino
Jakob Montoya		Michelle Padilla-Goode
Alexander Sol Olive		Judy Olive
Nicolas James Pitti		Robert & Rose Marie Longoria
Ruby Rhea		Bertha Jean Schmidt
David Arthur Ross		Arthur & Joan Ross
Michael Kevin Sadler		Kathy Miles
Casey Sandvick		Rich Sandvick
Robbie Severdia		Deedee Severdia
Adam James Parks Steinberg		Ella & Steve Steinberg
Jackson Jonathan-Michael Talbott		Meghan & Jason Talbott
Gabriel Alexander Whooley		Monica Whooley
Gregory Brian Wilhelm		Patricia & Roger Wilhelm
Kendra Elizabeth Young		Betsy & Bryant Young

### Footprints in the Sand

There was a day of sunshine,  
when you followed after me.  
Bare feet in cool sand.  
Small prints skipping  
through swirls of foam upon the shore.

Even as we danced and laughed  
The waves crashed against the rocks.  
Yet when I looked behind us  
Only smooth sand remained.

People have ceased to speak of you  
and grow uncomfortable when I do.  
But I refuse to let them, like the sea...  
erase your memory.

Karen Nelson  
TCF, Box Elder County, UT

### After October

and if there be a perfect month,  
for me, it is October...  
with days and nights like laughing fauns,  
with mornings bright and sober.  
when wind will dance in sudden glee  
to do the autumn-sweeping  
or cloud and fog and wistful rain  
can move a heart to weeping.  
and in October You were born,  
four days before November...  
and four years later you were gone,  
my little son, my only son,  
I love you.  
and remember. . .

Sascha Wagner  
© The Compassionate Friends



## 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 gifts were received for November/ December:

Donor/s: Mary Fishman  
Child: Robert Craig Wilson  
Dates:

"Forever missed. Forever loved. "

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Donor/s: Gail & Roy Jackson  
Child: Alia Rose Jackson Mehta  
Dates:

"Thinking of you always."

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### Tiny Little Footprints

Little footprints on a paper,  
Tiny footprints stamped on white.  
No smiling pictures of your bath time,  
No running or flying a kite.  
Such sparse memories I have of you,  
Sweet, beautiful, babies mine.  
No keepsake rattles or no bronzed shoes,  
No treasures for me to find.  
Just tiny little footprints,  
That I look at every day,

My memories of two little boys,  
That the Angels took away.  
We will make a million memories,  
When Daddy and I get there,  
Oh wait, we'll make it two million,  
After all, you are a pair.

Marilyn Rollins  
TCF Lake-Porter County, IN  
In Memory of Reece and Andersen, sons of Mike  
and Kathy Williams

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### Circle

How do you bear it all?  
The cry came from a mother  
Whose son had died only weeks before.  
We were in a circle, looking at her,  
Looking around, looking away,  
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.  
How do we bear it?  
I don't know,  
But the circle helps.

Eva Lager  
TCF/Western Australia  
(Eve's daughter Milya Claudia Lager died by suicide  
on 4 March 1990.)

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We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to  
accept the one that is waiting for us.

Joseph Campbell

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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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 NEW THANKSGIVING

On Thanksgiving morning 1991, I was standing at the sink, peeling potatoes. The turkey was in the oven, the pies were cooling on the sideboard. Just another normal holiday morning. At 10:30 the phone rang. I was closest, so I answered it.

That call from the San Diego medical examiner changed my life forever.

Within seconds our whole household was in chaos and shock our beautiful daughter Nancy had been killed in a car accident earlier that morning.

How could this be? I had just talked with her less than 24 hours before. She had wished us a "happy Turkey Day" and closed her call with "I love you, Mom." That was to be the last time I would hear her voice.

How did I get from that day of wrenching pain to this day nine years later? The simple answer is: a minute, an hour, a day at a time....putting one foot in front of the other, reaching out for people who had been where I was.

The first Thanksgiving after Nancy's death was the most difficult. I couldn't bring myself to cook or even look at a turkey. The decorated paper plates and napkins in the store were sickening to me. My solution to the turkey was to serve prime rib instead. That strategy got me through the next two Thanksgivings.

One of my watershed moments came on the fourth Thanksgiving after Nancy's accident. My surviving children wanted the traditional turkey-and-trimmings dinner. They missed the old ways. The truth is, they had moved forward and they wanted me to take that step also.

Reluctantly, I obliged, but with a heavy heart. With red roses nearby and her candle lit, we gathered together and counted our blessings.

Today with love and support of family and friends, I will once again prepare the Thanksgiving dinner. It will always be "different." I can't change what was. I can, however, choose to embrace the life I have now. There is so much more to be grateful for. Not a day goes by that I don't count my blessings. Among the greatest of these is the love of family and friends, and peace in my heart.

I truly believe that those blessings can be yours, too. Time, tears, love of family, good friends, and reinvestment can lead you there.

Mary Conway  
TCF, Nashville, TN  
In Memory of my daughter, Nancy

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## About Christmas

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them.

But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes there is death. Yes, there is a great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is 7  
hope. There is birth. There is light.

In a society which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

Dennis Klass  
TCF St. Louis, MO

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## Giving Myself Permission

It has been nearly five years since my only child died, but this will be my sixth Christmas without his unique enthusiasm, anticipation and happiness at the prospect of the holiday season.

After two rocky attempts to handle the holiday season, I gave myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I am not accountable to anyone for my ups and downs at the holidays. Last year was easier than the previous year and that year was easier than the one before. But there is a reason for this: in talking with other members of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I realized that I owe no explanations. Therefore, I make it easy on myself and on those who love me.

Instead of getting caught up in the commercialism of the holiday, I contemplate the true meaning of the season and initiate activities that have little to do with the season. I intentionally avoid Christmas because it is, simply, too painful for me. Others in our Compassionate Friends group have returned to their normal celebrations with children and extended family. Some have modified their traditions; a few have chosen to take a trip and escape the holiday memories entirely.

We give ourselves permission to handle this time of year in a way that is most soothing to us. If we do not do this, we suffer setback after setback in our grief. We often make small concessions for others in our family, of course. But are we really in the spirit? Probably not. Does it really matter? Probably not.

Each year I now put a wreath on our front door. I buy a gift for an underprivileged child and include a card that is signed with my son's name. I send gift cards to those who I am morally obliged to remember and buy small gifts for friends and family who truly appreciate the thought and effort I have made.

That's Christmas now. I have given myself permission to handle it in the only way that keeps serenity, peace and hope in my heart.

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

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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

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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



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Marin County Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

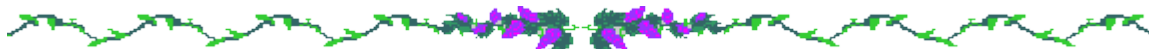
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The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter  
P. O. Box 150935  
San Rafael, CA 94915

**NOV—DEC, 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](https://smile.amazon.com). (If you have one, you can use the same account on [Amazon.com](https://Amazon.com) and [AmazonSmile](https://AmazonSmile). Your shopping cart, Wish List and other account settings are also the same.) (2) On your first visit to AmazonSmile, [smile.amazon.com](https://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](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation. Eligible products are marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on their product detail pages.

