



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



July—August, 2022 ISSUE

Vol 43, No. 4

#1184

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

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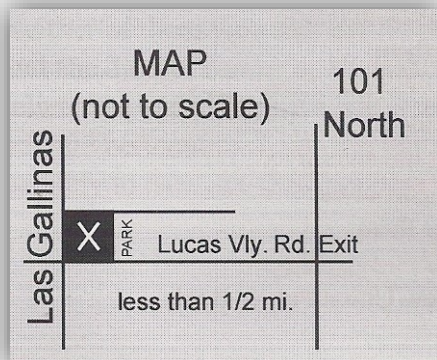
Mark Rosengarden

TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:

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 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.



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



Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, July 18, 2022
Monday, August 15, 2022
Monday, September 18, 2022
Monday, October 16, 2022



TCF RESOURCES:

The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter

P.O. Box 150935
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www.tcfmarin.org
tcfmarin@gmail.com
<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
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TCF National Office:

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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
survivorsof suicide.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

[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org Ph.: 707.721.4062

Milestones

A kaleidoscope of images will affect all of us during this month of May, when family celebrations and gathering times abound, most especially Mother's Day, Memorial Day and high school graduation. These are days that normally mark milestones and create bonds and memories within families. As so often, the focus on family and children will touch the emptiness we carry inside our beings. It is so hard to come to grips with the ongoing reality of our child's death. We take it in as we are able, over many months and years, struggling to gain the courage and strength to accept what we cannot change.

Reading about the insights and journeys of other bereaved parents continues to help me in my own healing. Recently, the words of Ann K. Finkbeiner, in *After the Death of a Child: Living with Loss through the Years*, have offered me new perspectives, understanding and wisdom. In her book, Finkbeiner, a bereaved parent and a science writer, explores the long-term, large-scale effects of a child's death through a series of interviews with bereaved parents. She concludes: "In the end, I learned two things about the long-term effects of losing a child. One is that a child's death is disorienting. The human mind is wired to find patterns and attach meanings, to associate things that are alike, to generalize from one example to another, in short, to make sense of things. Your mind could no more consciously stop doing this than your heart could consciously stop beating. But children's deaths make no sense, have no precedents, are part of no pattern; their deaths are unnatural and wrong. So parents fight their wiring, change their perspectives, and adjust to a reality that makes little sense."

The other thing I learned is that letting go of a child is impossible. One of my earliest and most persistent reactions to T.C.'s death was surprise. I had no idea what ever how much he had meant to me. All I knew was that I hadn't wanted to think about it. Our children are in our blood; the bond with them doesn't seem to break, and the parents [who were interviewed] found subtle and apparently unconscious way of preserving that bond.....None of this—that children are a central part of parents, are the link between the parent's past and future, are tied up with the parent's own self-image—is surprising....What is surprising is that it's true. We're not used to this sort of merger with another person. We're used to thinking of ourselves as separate individuals; we fall in love, we make alliances, we have obligations, but we do all this as free agents. We choose our own lives and die our own deaths. But we don't choose our love of, alliance with, or obligations to our children. Our children are much more central; they're something like our own humanness or our reasons for being on earth. If children are part of parents, they are not arms or legs but bones and breath...."

Perhaps Ann Finkbeiner's words will be helpful to you, as they are to me. Perhaps you have other readings to suggest or your own writings to share. I welcome them all for publication in the newsletter (to be published, articles and poems must include the author's name). In our attempts to make sense of what is senseless, let us continue to hold out our hands to one another in empathy and friendship and in honor of our beautiful children, forever loved and missed.

Kitty Reeve
TCF Marin and San Francisco, CA

My Child Died Today

I double over from the pain in my midsection and heart. I sob. I cannot breathe. I count the minutes since my child was alive. Shock freezes my body, paralyzes my mind and permeates my soul. My sense of reality is now the deepest fog. I know I will not survive this. I am ready to die. I think I am dreaming, and I will wake up. My child will be here. But I am awake. My child is dead. My child has died. A primal scream begins deep within me and rushes upward, piercing the early morning air. I know I will perish, and I look forward to a quick end. Can I live without my child? Do I want to live?

My mantra becomes breathe deeply, hold and exhale. This is my only reality. I feel that I am fading into the fog. I force myself to drink water. I cannot eat. My mind wanders and then returns to this place; I am physically jolted into my body each time I grasp the finality of my child's death. The people around me are a blur. I aimlessly pace the floor. I cannot remain still.

Anxiety has conquered my mind. I cannot think, talk, communicate, understand or comprehend.
(see page 6)

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

Lunch With Michelle

In the many years that I counseled bereaved parents in my private practice and in my work with Compassionate Friends, I had never met another mother with a similar situation to mine. But today I had lunch with Michelle Miller. Michelle's experience was uncannily like my own. We both had little girls who were pulled out to sea by a rogue wave. Her little Carolyn was 8 and my little Kristen was 7. They both had brothers with them who were slightly older and fortunately survived being hit by the wave. We were both single mothers. Michelle has two older sons, with the youngest close in age to Carolyn as my son Michel was to Kristen. Our lunch lasted 5 hours.

Michelle and I found a kindred connection in our unique situations. We both wondered what our daughters were thinking in their last moments. Were they calling for us as they held their breath, in the undertow? How long was your daughter in the water? The intense cold. Hypothermia. We had both heard stories of people in near drowning situations and had hung onto their descriptions of a sense of peace.

Do you think Kristen and Carolyn felt such peace? What do you think they felt? Coast Guard helicopters searched for their bodies. Carolyn was found that day. Kristen was not. How about your son? Does he go to the ocean? Do you? Both of our sons are quiet about their experiences and don't often share openly. Time stood still as we layered one experience over the other. A question, another thought, a nod of recognition. A knowing. What do you feel when you watch the waves? Do they come in or go out? Through smiles and tears we shared a journey that only the two of us could.

Kristen and Carolyn. Both children of Aries. The months of their deaths are near each other. Their death years far apart. Kristen died over 30 years ago and Carolyn in 2001. The dates are irrelevant. Time was irrelevant. Our hearts were torn open in the same way, by the same rogue wave. We both taught our children a love of the outdoors. We loved to hike, kayak, and explore, but nature turned on us that day. Our beautiful Pacific. We both had to find a way to befriend the ocean once again. We each found our own way.

When Michelle left, I thought about our little Kristen and Carolyn and knew they were smiling. Their mommies had connected. Neither of us had shared with another as we shared today. I'm invited to her house to have lunch, sit in the sun and walk to Corte Madera Creek to see The Compassionate Friends memorial stones with our little girls' names. Michelle heard of another mother whose five-year-old daughter was pulled out near the same place as Carolyn about one week later. We are going to try to find her. This is the essence of Compassionate Friends.

YOUR TREE NOVEMBER 13, 1998

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

Mommy



Our Children Remembered

July

Child	Born	Anniversary	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

"If you have ever lost a loved one, then you know exactly how it feels. And if you have not, then you cannot possibly imagine it." — Lemony Snicket, *The Bad Beginning*

Our Children Remembered

August

Child	Born	Anniversary	Bereaved
Alana Teresa Alioto			John Alioto
Beth Ann Aney			Sharon Guy
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
Scanlan Derrick			Susan Derrick
Michael Chad Harris			Jerry & Trena Harris
Alecia Anne Marie Hopper			Bill Hopper, Constance Blake
Ian Emerson Jones			Nanette Biers
Grace Perin Kuhzarani			Rachel Kepp & Ali Kuhzarani
Michael J. Lockwood			Barbara Lockwood Albertoni
Mathew Gary Luce			Alice Clary, Christie Clary
Richard C. Mannheimer, Jr.			Shirlee J. Newman
Richard C. Mannheimer, Jr.			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
Forest Elijah Newcomg			Annie Mecchi
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
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

“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

Gone yet not forgotten, although we are apart, your spirit lives within me, forever in my heart. - Author Unknown

What are they saying? Why do I care? Where is my child?
I want to be with my child. I must be with my child. Somebody medicates me. I fall into dreamless and fitful sleep, sliding, sinking, falling.

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

Peace

Today is the one year anniversary of the day my son realized he could no longer live. I know this because he told us so in the writings he left behind. It is not the anniversary of his death.

What I remember of the day is that it was not unlike any other. There were no family fights or friend drama. There were no failed tests or poor academic projects.

It was just a day like today.

That week was just like any other as well. Tom attended high school and college classes, and we worked, going through our days just as we always do. But Tom found a way to spend special time with each of us before he left. He and L.J. spent Monday night playing music together. I tried to record it, but it was not perfect, so I deleted the file that night. Tuesday night he and I made his favorite meal together, pasta with hot sausage red sauce. Then, we played a complicated Wii game which consisted of me pushing random buttons to fend off the bad guys while he worked his magic on the most powerful villains. We played for a few hours, until my hands hurt and I could not see straight from all of the blurred images on the television. He played the music he loved and told me which was his favorite song. I listened to it through his ears, but cannot remember the song name. That night, he peeked his head in our room, and played with the light switch, turning it on and closing the door behind him with a mischievous grin. He spent the next few days with his father, doing the things they loved to do together, including gaming with a great bunch of folks on Friday night. He spent Saturday and Sunday at our house, doing homework, playing on the computer, and listening to music.

That Sunday, as I cooked in the kitchen and talked casually with him, he wrote his final farewell to us.

We had no idea of his pain, his plan, or our future.

In his note, he told us that past week had been the happiest he could remember because he was able to live during that time without fear and anxiety of the future. So a part of me is at peace, if that's possible, because he was able to spend his final hours free from his demons. But how I wish, in that week, he had found the strength to fight through the darkness and tell us of his inner war. How I wish I had seen past his armored wall into his soul, so I could pull him through to the light of our love. I wish we could have shown him how many people appreciated him and were impacted by him, and how many would have stood by his side as he fought his undiagnosed illness so he could win his battle with a full army. I wish...

I miss him every hour of every day. I miss his humor, his intelligence, his presence, his thoughtfulness and his soul. Someone recently responded on one of my posts that maybe Tom misses me, too. I hope he is beside me as I write, and can feel the outpouring of whatever is stronger than love, that I have for him. I pray that through his death, he found the peace he could not find in life.

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

Survival Plan

There are times in the life of a bereaved parent when we are feeling fine and are going about our daily activities when suddenly, off in the distance, we begin to inwardly feel a change in the atmosphere of our soul. The rumbling storm clouds start to gather and an icy wind blows a cold rain through our heart. The dull ache that has been kept to a minimum suddenly becomes unbearable once again.

We've been blindsided by grief. It's for times like these that we need to develop survival skills. We need to find a fallback position where we can seek shelter, calm ourselves, rest and regroup. The time to formulate this contingency plan is not when we're in the middle of agonizing sorrow, but when we are feeling and doing well. We can even make a list of ideas, put them into writing and save them for those moments when we are not able to think about what's going to help us in the midst of our blinding pain. What calms and soothes you the best when the bad days come and you're longing for the touch of your child?

Would your respite be snuggling in bed under a warm blanket with a hot cup of tea or perhaps watching a favorite movie that you and your child would have enjoyed together? Maybe hugging and telling your surviving children or grandchildren how much you love and treasure them; would this ease your sorrow? Would writing a poem or love letter to your child and reading it out loud help afford you some peace? Would calling one of our Loving Listener's for comfort and understanding assist you during this difficult time?

If you haven't been to a TCF meeting in a while, plan on attending the next one. Give yourself something to hold on to and look forward to. We all know that the death of our child is something that we will never "get over" but we can try to find ways to make it through the really bad days. We are here to help.

Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Forgive Me

There's a hole where my heart used to be.

When I smile at you and say I'm okay,
Forgive me.

I know you want to help me but I turn you away,
Forgive me.

I show no interest, nor do I seem to care.
Forgive me.

For there's an emptiness now where my heart used to be.

Alannah McGregor
TCF Victoria, AU
In Memory of my daughter and son, Angela and Stuart

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 July & August:

Donor/s: Diane Sielert
Child: Richard Sielert
Dates: 2/19/64 - 7/12/14

Donors: Alan & Ginny. Pabst
Child: Rebecca Pabst
Dates: 8/8/68 - 11/9/94

"Miss you every day!"

Donor/s: Daly & David Schreck
Child: Colin Edward Schreck
Dates: 8/5/76 - 2/17/17

"Our beloved son, you are with us always and will live forever in our hearts.

Love. Mother & Dad, Chris, Lesley & Ireland, Ireland David & Michaelanne Daly"

Happy Birthday in Heaven

Today we remember the day we were blessed with your birth.

How wonderful to have your life to share upon this earth.

Too few birthdays you spent with us, now another in heaven.

We wonder what our lives would be if you were still here in them.

But sadly it is not our fate to spend our days with you. So we will cherish our memories to help see us through.

Our memories of your smile, compassionate, generous ways,
The joy you brought to all you saw each and every day.

Oh Son how we wish so bad we could be together,
But always know we love you today, tomorrow and forever.

Happy Birthday precious angel, may your spirit soar above,
Mom, Dad, Sister, family and friends sending all our love.

Cindy McClain
TCF of the Wabash Valley, IN
In Memory of my son Dylan

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.



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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JUL—AUG, 2022

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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.

