
HANDPRINTS



Volume 5 Issue 1

Winter 2004

Inside this Issue:

What's New @ HAND

Recollections of a Walk

The Bonds That Survive

A Father Learning to Cope

Parent Poems

Editor's Column Topic:
Reaching out for
Comfort

The Pit of Grief

Hello From the Founder of
HAND

To My Dear Friend

Sharing Comments:
Parent to Parent

Memorial Donations



Helping After Neonatal Death
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341
(408) 995-6102

Finding Support

By Mary Fisher

My mind raced, "What if I cry? I don't want to cry in front of a bunch of strangers." "I don't even know them," I thought. "How can sitting around with a group of people help me feel better?" I argued my point successfully in my head and talked myself out of attending my first support group meeting.

The next week went by just like the past weeks – me crying alone, hoping someone would step forward to help ease my pain. I really needed to share my feelings, but all everyone did was offer pitiful advice, none of which was helpful. I was so disappointed to see that my best friend felt awkward around me. I wondered if she was even avoiding me. Most of my family seemed to think if they just left me alone long enough, I'd get over losing my baby. I didn't see how they could just walk away and be so cold. At work, people always looked away when I came near them, or stopped talking and looked at their feet. I felt like all of these people that I thought I knew were suddenly strangers. They were definitely acting strange!

A nice lady who helps with the local infant loss group, called me again to encourage me to attend the support group. The day she called, I was at the end of my rope, and I was so grateful for her call. She seemed to be the only person who understood what I was feeling, so I promised her I would attend the next group. My husband, however, did not think it was a good idea, but I convinced him to come to support me and just listen. I told him they wouldn't make him talk and I knew they didn't have any ancient torture methods, so I was sure they wouldn't get him to.

I was nervous the day before our first support group, and I talked myself out of going several times, but that night I just knew I should try it. Everyone welcomed us but I felt like running away. I sat down, stared at my hands and hoped it would be over soon. The first couple that spoke described their awful experience of losing their baby and I thought, "Wow, my loss is nothing compared to that." I wondered how they had the strength to even be here! They went on to talk about their baby. They spoke so lovingly about him that my heart filled with love for this precious child. Suddenly I wanted to share information about our little girl, her soft curls, button nose and long fingers. I had never told anyone about that. I was too nervous to speak up, so I just sat and listened some more.

Finding Support continued on page 2

HAND

Helping After Neonatal Death is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that helps parents, their families, and their healthcare providers cope with the loss of a baby before, during, or after birth.

Business Contact Information:

Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341
(408) 995-6102

Services Contact Information:

Alameda & Contra Costa County
Central Valley
Santa Clara County
(888) 908-HAND (4263)

Visit our Website:

<http://www.handonline.org>

HANDPRINTS

A publication of Helping After Neonatal Death © 2004. Material contained in this newsletter may only be reprinted with written permission and credit to the source.

HAND welcomes letters and other contributions to our newsletter. If you choose to submit materials to HAND, you agree that HAND and its designees may reproduce, modify and otherwise use the submitted materials without compensation or attribution to you both in this publication and in other forms or media as further detailed in our publication guidelines. Please direct all submissions to:

Handprints Editor
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341

Editor: Darla Harmon
handprints@handonline.org

Finding Support continued from page 1

Little by little, I started looking around at the people in the group. They were from all walks of life with different personalities, but there was such a bond there. I noticed my husband intently listening to the next couple that spoke. The dad seemed like a real macho type of guy, but he was able to talk about how hard it was not being able to fix his wife's pain. She assured him that just holding her and being patient was what she appreciated the most from him. I secretly hoped my husband heard that loud and clear! Some of the people talked about things that were happening to them, and I felt better because many of the same things had happened to me. Maybe I wasn't losing my mind. Luckily, I didn't have to talk much, and when I did briefly tell our story, I felt a little silly that I cried. I was relieved when the meeting was over so I could retreat to my quiet home.

That night I thought a lot about the other people at the group and what they had said. For the first time in several months, I thought about someone else's pain instead of only my own. I wondered if I would go next time. I decided to just wait and see how I felt.

In the coming weeks, the blur of life continued to rush past me, so once again I felt driven into the solitary confinement of my bed. My husband and I couldn't seem to talk without making each other mad, so painful silence seemed to be the only remedy. I decide to try group again because I figured things couldn't get any worse in my life than they already were. This time it was easier to see these people and I shared more of my story. I was really touched to see another mom wipe a tear as she listened to me talk. That is when I started to bond with these people whom I never knew before. Even my husband opened up some. In time, we shared and discussed many topics at group, but what really helped me was to learn that I could guide my friends and family on how to be helpful to me. I had to speak up and ask for what I needed. It wasn't that they didn't care about me; it was that they didn't know how to show it or what to do. Not all of my friends were teachable, but the new ones, the real ones, I had made through the support group, more than made up for it. ❖

The ultimate measure of a man
is not where he stands
in moments of comfort and convenience,
but where he stands
at times of challenge and controversy.

By Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHAT'S NEW @ HAND

The location for grief support meetings in Santa Clara County has been moved to a new location. Meetings are still held on the first and third Thursdays of each month. If you're interested in attending, please call 888-908-4263 so that a facilitator can get back to you with the new meeting location details.

HAND will be holding its annual elections shortly for Board of Directors positions. This is a great way to help out the organization and guide our future direction in supporting parents in need. If you are interested, please contact Craig at treasurer@handonline.org.

HAND is also seeking additional volunteers for various positions. We will be holding a volunteer orientation soon, so if you have considered volunteering, or just want to know what it's all about, please call the main number (888-908-4263) and let us know. We'll be in touch as the dates firm up. ❖

Recollections of a Memorable Night Walk

By Gina Glenn

I walked outside in the darkness of the night, as soon as the cold air was sucked down into my lungs, I felt alive again, resuscitated somehow. I had been suffocating inside the house, stifling my emotions, burying them away deep within myself. I had been allowing myself to hide from my reality yet at the same time hating myself for doing it. Breathing in the cold, crisp fresh air I felt revitalized, alive, living, breathing and most important of all I was feeling. I found myself staring up at that vast dark night sky, wondering where you were. Can you see me way down here desperately looking for a connection with you across the great divide? I found myself longing for you, wishing I could reach out and touch you, hold you, feel you in my arms. Suddenly as if you were sending me a message I see a shooting star fly across the sky. In the dark majesty of the night sky there is a beacon of hope, a ray of sunshine in my darkness. I suddenly am overcome with emotion, the dam from all the pent up emotion, is all consuming and yet is crumbling down and the tears begin to flow. Once again I begin to feel the bittersweet release of knowing it cannot hurt me. As long as I am able to feel then there is hope that one day I may heal. ❖

The best way out is always through.
By Robert Frost

Resource: Father Matters

Father Matters is a non-profit organization put together by fathers and for fathers. It's purpose is to support, encourage, and enlighten today's dads. This organization is based around Fathers Mentoring Fathers Workshops and follows up with Men's Meeting Groups. These "come as you are" groups that provide a safe, non-attributable environment where fathers can share the joys and the sorrows, the triumphs and tragedies, and the personal challenges associated with fatherhood. Workshops are available in the Fremont area. Contact Father Matters (408) 977-7175. www.fathermatters.com ❖

For the Love of My Family

Just like a bright ray of light
On a mid-summer's morn
I remember the day
When I was Born.

I saw my mom, Brandy,
And my dad, Shane, too
And I just knew
I was looking for you.

I saw my brother, Christopher
And saw a bright ray
I knew I was home
And would want to stay.

All the hope was there
In the room I was in
But I knew the room
Would soon become dim.

Looking down at my family
Wondered why they're so sad
I had a problem, you see
Not because I was bad.

I longed for your touch
When we were together
And there's nothing in life
That would have been better.

Even through pictures
Everyone can see
You had a great love
Which you had for me.

My life would be clear
For the rest of your lives
And I will always know
Cuz I can see your eyes.

By Cody Suhama (in thought)
Submitted by his parents
Shane and Brandy Suhama

The Bonds That Survive

By Anne Musial

When we lost our Natalee at 37 weeks on December 25 of 1999, we were completely devastated. The anticipation and excitement we had was not only to have our first-born daughter but also to be among the many we knew who had just had babies or were about to, both friends and family alike.

My cousin had given birth to a healthy boy that October, my aunt, a healthy little girl in early December and our close friends were expecting a baby girl that February. We thought what fun it would be to have our children all grow up together until our dreams were shattered that horrible Christmas.

I didn't realize the strain that this sort of loss can have on those close to you. I was warned over and over that we could expect to lose friends, and contact with some family who wouldn't know how to deal with such a loss. I found this to be true in some cases and so contrary in others.

My best friend Liz was in the delivery room when I delivered my beautiful Natalee. She was there holding my hand crying with me and trying to be strong for me. We went through it together there and she never let me down thereafter. She was the first person to kiss my angel after she was born and I will never forget that sight for as long as I live. I didn't know anyone would be so brave to kiss a baby who was lifeless and silent, who was not from their own womb.

After I came home Liz called me at least twice a day, she came by, and she reminded me how much she loved me, she listened to me and she also protected me in any way she could from anything that could be hurtful or difficult for me. She was and still is an incredible friend.

She and her husband Lawrence sat with us at our Natalee's funeral and attended our private burial a week later. They were strong and unafraid of what was difficult for many to address.

After Natalee's burial they took us to a nice lunch and have always been there for us. They are special people who we think of as family. I had named Natalee after Liz with her middle name, Elizabeth, and subsequently have named my 8-month-old daughter Lyndsee Elizabeth.

We were fortunate to have many friends who stood by us during the difficult days and months that followed Natalee's death. Our other close friends who were expecting their baby girl just a month and a half after Natalee, Todd and Tina, were among those who will always remain close to my heart.

We had attended Lamaze together and compared shopping tips and had basically planned to have our daughters be the closest of friends as we were. They also bravely attended Natalee's funeral even with their own baby just weeks away from being born.

When we had learned that we had lost Natalee one of the first things that had popped into my head was that Todd and Tina should stay far away, as if it were contagious. Our other friends, Desi and Chris had stopped all of their own Christmas festivities to be with us during the night when we lost Natalee and also broke the news to Todd and Tina the day after Christmas. I cannot imagine how difficult that must have been for them.

Todd, with his own baby on the way still managed to come to the hospital to be there for my husband when he learned of our tragedy. Something that I can imagine was the last thing he would want to do, but he did it to be there for us.

After the dust settled and the services were done we were not in the mood to socialize or do the regular get-togethers we had done so frequently before. It was especially hard for me to be around Tina as she anxiously waited for the arrival of her baby girl who thankfully came crying into this world on February 5, 2000. She was healthy and beautiful.

All of our friends were so sensitive to our feelings and so patient. They always tried to include us and didn't give up when we frequently declined. When we finally did go over to see their little girl they all sat solidly as I held her and quietly cried. Looking back, I cannot imagine how uncomfortable they must have been for them, but they continued to stick by us.

Liz, Lawrence, Todd, Tina, Desi and Chris all stood strong by us throughout our grieving process while I had members of my own family who avoided us and other friends who I lost contact with altogether because they could not deal with what to say or not say to us.

The Bonds That Survive continued on page 5

The Bond That Survives continued from page 4

Looking back, four years later, after talking to others who have experienced loss and considering the situation with a more peaceful point of view, I am amazed at the endurance these friends of ours have. Their loyalty and persistence is so rare and so genuine. We were lucky to not only have them as friends in our lives, but to have remained friends with them as the years of passed.

Life has gone on and we have all gotten busy with the day-to-day responsibilities of things with our living children and work, and other obligations. But I will never forget the strength and perseverance of our very special friends who stood by us and helped bring us through the darkest time of our lives. ❖

Group Therapy

When furry low-browed mothers keened for babies lost to gods or wolves, they huddled round communal fires and groomed the grief-struck ones, flinging howls at darkness come too close. With rites well tuned to ancient mother's grief, we weep; our ring of folding chairs the cave, warm coffee urn the fire. This is no church; our mourning song no hymn, intervention if now offered comes to late.

Death is not here vanquished, only shared.

By Carla Altizer

A Father Learning to Cope

By John Cooper

The first thing I remember after my son's death is the doctors and social worker telling me that I must be strong for my wife, Dalice. In addition, the social worker said the we would be referred to an organization called HAND.

After the initial shock of his death, we began the lengthy transition of experiencing our grief. The loss of both Jason and our parenthood had made us much more aware of our own mortality and the fact that we could lose each other. Eventually, it was time for me to go back to work, and Dalice was left at home by herself. At this time we were very supportive of each other and we were both compelled by our conscience not to burden other people with our experiences.

However, with time I felt my primary duty was to deal with our financial responsibilities. This proved to be an ideal situation for submerging myself in my work. Dalice didn't want to talk much, and as I became more involved in work, I didn't have to deal with my grief. I did worry about Dalice and what this experience was doing to us.

In spite of my love for Dalice, I was unable to give her much of the support that she really needed or that I thought she needed. I was always either at or working at home. I didn't know what to do for Dalice, it seemed that she just wanted to be left alone. When I was in an up mood, Dalice was down and visa versa. I felt that Dalice was angry with me for working, and I couldn't understand why.

At my first HAND support group meeting, I became aware of the grief I had been experiencing, and I was given the opportunity to express my anger and frustration. At a Compassionate Friends meeting, I gained a perspective about my grief and the grief of others. Indeed, the experience of grief is overwhelming for most of us and in some way unique for all of us.

The counseling was the most enlightening for me. I learned about grief and was given the opportunity to express both my anger and my pain. The counselor helped Dalice and me to understand and deal with each other's varied moods and stages of grief. We learned that while Dalice and I shared this traumatic experience, we were not responsible for each other's feelings. We continued the counseling through Dalice's subsequent pregnancy until the amniocentesis tests indicated that we had a healthy girl. ❖

*Parent Poems:*February Moon

For Julia

When spring was still too early
You came to me.

In my stillness, in darkness
I became a receptacle
Loving you. You came closer.
Each day I spoke to you.
You listened.

In my darkness, in stillness
One voice, high-pitched wailing.
Two hearts breaking
Your soul slipped through
I released you.

There are no words.

Two years - two full circles.
In the stillness, in the light
You come again, reaching through my sadness.
Cloaked receptacle.
You speak, I listen.

By Marilyn Sponza-Swartz

Earth Angel

Tears in my eyes,
My nightmare begins.
My angel is in Heaven,
Earth Angel walks in.

I look in her eyes,
She grabs my hand.
I start to scream why,
She understands.

My angel in heaven,
No hope in my sight.
Earth angel worked hard,
To get me through that night.

She didn't have wings,
Or fly in heaven above.
A person here on earth,
So full of compassion and love.

As my angel flew to heaven, I wonder...
How I would never have survived,
Without my earth angel,
Right by my side.

For Becky Stange
Who was my earth angel
on the worst night of my life.
By Anne Musial

Dear friend,

These are difficult times and we both feel pain and frustration. You cannot understand me as I deal with my grief. I don't seem to be the same person you used to know, and I'm not sure if I ever will be my "old self" again. This kind of pain leaves deep etches on a person's life. But, I do know that without grief there is no healing, and so this is a journey I must take. Circumstances have made that choice for me. So as a friend, could you please offer me your deepest understanding, lend me your listening ear, and occasionally walk with me as I travel the path toward healing. You are a dear friend, and I truly hope that had the shoe been on the other foot, I'd have done the same for you.

By Darla Harmon

To One in Sorrow

Let me come in where you are weeping, friend,
 And let me take your hand.
 I, who have known a sorrow such as yours,
 Can understand.
 Let me come in - I would be very still
 Beside you in your grief;
 I would not bid you cease your weeping, friend,
 Tears bring relief.
 Let me come in - I would only breathe a prayer,
 And hold your hand,
 For I have known a sorrow such as yours,
 And understand.
 By Grace Noll Crowell

*Shared joy is double joy.
 Shared sorrow is half sorrow.
 Swedish Proverb*

From My Heart

Editor's Column

Reaching out for Comfort

No man is an island. People need support in every day life, whether at work or at home. But when faced with the insurmountable task of grieving the loss of a child, you may need help beyond your normal circle of friends and family. Reaching out is not a sign of weakness. There is strength in numbers and benefits to sharing pain.

You may be disappointed with friends or family whom you expected to instinctively know how to help you through these difficult times, or at least try. At the same time, you may be surprised at the few individuals who are able to step forward and provide much needed support. It is like they reach right in and touch your wounded heart. They stand at your side like a faithful guard dog, quietly lending their strength. How could this be when most people feel awkward and are inexperienced with grief? Society today does little to improve people's knowledge on how to cope with loss, or support someone who is experiencing it. The media encourages us to seek the quick fix for everything from dieting to financial wealth, but there is no quick fix for grief. If there were, I'd give it to you (or be very rich by selling it). No, we must take it one day at a time, but not alone. Embrace those who try to help and if necessary teach them what they can do to help you. I can tell you most definitely that every griever is different and needs different things! We should not cope with grief alone, but we can't wait for a psychic to come along and know what we need. We must reach out.

I often witness the amazing power that grievers have when they share their loss with another grieving person. Support groups bring total strangers together in the same room, but the shared loss of a child, makes them friends. There is a brother or sisterhood that, although you wouldn't wish for anyone to be initiated into it, exists like an invisible bond when grievers come together. While grieving we need people to listen to us, to share our experiences, to laugh and cry with us, and no one can do that better than someone who has been through the loss of a child. So I encourage you to reach out when you are hurting. Be empowered by sharing your pain; empowered to heal, empowered to understand, empowered to survive, and maybe sharing your loss will empower someone else to do the same.

By Darla Harmon ❖

Looking In

By all outward appearances,
One would never guess,
This body carried a child,
Watched it grow within.

There are few physical reminders,
A mere few months later.
I may walk with empty arms,
They are heavy from my broken heart.

I often hear from outsiders,
"You look wonderful again!"
I would trade it all easily,
For just one kick, one cry.

Time has made it easier to accept,
This new version of myself.
Although I see her smile in my reflection,
I also see great sadness.
She wishes her freedom and restful nights,
Had not held such a dear and painful price.

Yet even after this pain and suffering,
My heart longs to do it all again.
I look to the day when I am blessed,
To carry a child under my heart once more.

By Nancy Trunzo

The Pit Of Grief

By Cindy Early

The day my child died, I fell into the pit of grief. My friends watched me struggle through daily life, waiting for the person I once was to arise from the pit, not realizing "she" is gone forever. The pit is full of darkness, heartache and despair, it paralyzes your thoughts, movements and ability to rationalize. The pit leaves you forever changed, unable to surface the person you once were. Some of my pre-grief friends gather around the top of the pit, waiting for the old me to appear before their eyes, not understanding what's taking me so long to emerge. After all...in their eyes, I've been in the pit for quite some time. Yet, in my eyes, it seems as if I fell in only yesterday. Not all my pre-grief friends are gathered at the top of the pit. Some are helping me with the climb out of the darkness. They climb side by side with me from time to time, but mostly they climb ahead of me, waiting patiently at each plateau. Even with these friends I sometimes wonder if they are also waiting for the pre-grief me to magically appear before their eyes. Then, there are the casual acquaintances, you know the ones who say, "hi, how are you?" when the really don't care or really don't want to know. These people are the people who sigh in relief, that it was my child who died and not theirs. You know...the "better them, than me" attitude (not that I blame them for that sigh or attitude, I too wish it happened to someone other than myself). My post-grief friends are the ones who climb with me, side by side, inch by inch, out of the pit of grief. They have no way of comparing the pit climber to the pre-grief person I once was. You see, they started at the bottom of the pit with me. They are able to reassure me when I need reassurance, rest when I need resting, and encourage me to move forward when I don't have the strength. They have no expectations, no memories and no recollection of how I "should" be. They want me to get better, to smile more often and find joy in life, but they've also accepted the person I've become. The "person" who is emerging from the pit. ❖

A Long Distance Hello From the Founder of HAND

By Elaine Karas, Founder of HAND

It was with great pride that I read the HAND Winter Newsletter that I serendipitously found on-line this evening. It is overwhelmingly touching to see my words written 18 years ago when I suffered my miscarriage upon the pages of the 2003 newsletter. I thought I would give you an update of what I have been doing since I resigned as HAND's founder and director back in 1986. Ironically, I was relating to a colleague recently my pivotal life events. I related the creation of HAND and how the mothers, fathers, babies, siblings, and grandparents I encountered during those six years transformed the fabric of my life and provided a foundation for what would be my future. I learned about the depths of love, the tragedy of loss and the resilience of families when faced with one of life's greatest challenges. I also learned about courage. I witnessed parental courage to embark on another pregnancy even though most profoundly there was a knowledge that there was no guarantee and conversely I witnessed the courage to continue with one's life knowing that there would never be another little life to hold in one's arms.

My official title is the Associate Director of Behavioral Science at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, which is the county hospital in San Bernardino, California. I went back to school and completed my M.S.W. and am now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I am on faculty in the family medicine program and my job now is to teach young doctors about many behavioral components of healthcare including how to support families when family members die. I also have a private psychotherapy practice in the small town where I live now in Claremont, California. Thus, my work with HAND is still and will always be close to my heart and the life stories and experiences that were shared with me, propel me to teach the young residents how to empathetically support families to facilitate the grieving process of families.

My son Erik who was a baby when I started HAND, recently graduated from the University of Colorado. My daughter, Jessica, who was born when I was directing HAND, is now 20 and on her way to Florence, Italy to study art. My husband, Jim, is a judge in Southern California. I still see two of the board members from my days at HAND, who are two of my closest friends, Pam Poetsch and Linda Fillhardt.

Thank you for the acknowledgment and for the memories. If anyone would like to contact me, you can reach me at elainemk27@yahoo.com or through my secretary at (909) 580-1373. I would love to hear from you! ❖

My Wish For You

May the trail of the wind leave its songs in your path,
May the sun light the sky where you stand;
May the pleasure of friendship be yours through the days,
With the clasp of a caring hand.

By Virginia Covey Boswell

To My Dear Friend, Denise

By Teri Dunkin (in loving memory of Denise Renee Simmons and Miranda Mary Dunkin)

After the loss of my daughter Miranda I didn't know how I would survive. I thought maybe HAND could help me come back to life. That first night I met you and from the start there was a bond like no other – the special bond between two childless mothers. You were there when I needed you most. Daily phone calls sometimes at two o'clock in the morning – with you I could talk about it all – why, how and will there ever be more. Your friendship brought me back to life. God finally blessed each of us with our beautiful daughters and we shared in the joy of bringing our babies home. As our first born babies taught us – life is short, never take it for granted. Now I grieve once more this time it is for you my friend. Now I know though, death does not destroy love, it takes it to heaven and treasures it eternally. Denise, I will cherish our friendship for the rest of my life. My friend, you go play with, laugh, and love our first born angel babies and I will watch over our precious babies here on earth until we are all together again. ❖

HAND SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Pregnancy and Infant Loss

Central Valley:

The first and third Sunday of the month. 7-9 pm.

Fremont:

The first and third Wednesday of the month. 7-9 pm

Pleasanton:

The second Thursday of each month. 7-8:30 pm

Santa Clara:

The first and third Thursday of the month. 7:30-9 pm.

Subsequent Pregnancy

Fremont:

The second Saturday of each month. 1:30-3:30 pm.

Santa Clara:

The second Thursday of each month. 7:30-9:30pm.

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Groups are available on an "as needed" basis. Please contact HAND for specific information on a group in your area.

For more information on any of the support groups, please call toll-free (888) 908-HAND (4263)

You lift me, I'll lift you,
and we'll ascend together.

AuthorUnknown

Parent to Parent

What people made up your support system while you were grieving and what did they do that helped?

The people who made up our support system were most family members, friends and HAND. Heidi, a volunteer with HAND, helped me keep my sanity by keeping close contact and just listening and I lived for the support group meetings. Our family was very supportive when we skipped Christmas altogether and our friends never gave up on us when we weren't feeling very social. We were very lucky and I still thank God for them and ask Natalee to watch over them too. — Anne

After the loss of a child, our whole world was torn apart. Everything that you thought was going to be "right" suddenly becomes "wrong". Plans that were made for the expectant child are now cancelled. Everything stops, and you feel alone. Who do you turn to? For my wife and I, it was family. Not at first, because they were in as much shock as we were. They didn't know how to respond. But eventually, within what seemed the longest days, the love flowed in. My parents payed for the funeral costs for our stillborn Angelica. Family that I hadn't seen in years showed up for the funeral. Cards came in the mail with loving support. Sometimes they don't know what to say, but they express it nevertheless... — Martin

My church was a huge support system. They brought me dinner for 8 weeks after the baby had passed and also offered some counseling to my immediate family. My family and close friends were also another source of support. They would help me with my older daughter by taking her for a few hours so my husband and I could spend some time together. I felt it was important for us to spend some quality time together. Grief can often tear a couple apart and they become disconnected. — Rhonda

My support system right away became the HAND group, as they were a close net of parents. My family could not understand what we were going through, and if it wasn't for HAND I don't think we would have made it through the first year. We became good friends with the couples there and have them still in our lives. No one really can understand what we feel unless you have walked down the same path. — Carmen

The main thing that I would want to say about support groups is to make sure that you give them time to grow on you. It is nearly impossible to determine the benefit of the group by attending only one meeting. I recall the first HAND meeting that my wife and I attended. We were so smug thinking that we were doing really well compared to everyone else there, and didn't really need to do this support group thing. It wasn't until the next meeting or two that we realized that we were merely in shock and denial at the first meeting and in the same place as, or worse off than, the other people attending — and that we really did need the support group. We're attending another group now, and have had the exact same experience. I would highly recommend committing to 3-4 meetings before making a decision about whether the group is right for you. Ultimately, some of our closest, most dear friends, have come from that original support group. — Craig

Would you like to answer questions for the "Parent to Parent" Column?

Please contact Darla at handprints@handonline.org or (888) 908-HAND ❖

Donations Made By...

Thomas & Paula Book Jenna Kathryn Dale
 Bryan & Elizabeth Calhoun . . . Madeline Lucille Calhoun and in honor of Jack Calhoun
 John & Karen Carroll Justina Maxime Rose Carroll
 Robert & Laura Civilikas Sydney & Sienna Vasquez
 Bud & Martina Cummings Tea Re Matty
 Greg & Catherine Everson Baby Girl DiVerde
 Alan Franzenburg in honor of HAND
 Gerald & Margaret Gagle Garrett Hoffman
 Chris & Pamela Galvan Noah Christopher Galvan
 Corey & Tina Johnson Connor Thomas Johnson
 Paul & Anne Musial Natalee Elizabeth Musial
 James & Anne Packer Madeline L. Calhoun
 Craig & Julie Pampeyan Emily Ann Pampeyan

In Memory of...

Thank you for making a donation to HAND.



Special Thanks to Those

Who Support HAND through eScrip!

You, too, can support HAND with eScrip — it's fast, painless, and free to sign up. Each month, a portion of your regular spending at merchants who participate in the eScrip program gets donated to HAND to support our programs. Sign up today by going to www.eScrip.com and register your information, and remember to use HAND's ID number (**6079995**) when you sign up. Join the following people who have supported HAND through eScrip this year:

- Carmen Banuelos
- Julie Burke
- Brent Campbell
- Becca Coleman
- Joan Curtis
- Dana DiVerde
- Moonyeen Emerson
- Martin & Judy Espinoza
- Gina Galvan
- Pamela Galvan
- Mary Ludwick
- Timothy Maher
- Sharon Martin
- Heidi Olson
- Craig Pampeyan
- Nic Perez
- Elizabeth Pickert
- Belinda Spallas
- Crystal Suan
- Marilyn Weeks

RESOURCES

HAND of the Peninsula
 Post Office Box 3693
 Redwood City, CA 94064
 (650) 692-6655 crisis line
 (650) 367-6993 business office
Provides services to the San Mateo and Santa Cruz County areas.

Community Hospice, Inc.
 601 McHenry Avenue
 Modesto, CA 95350-5443
 (209) 577-0615
Provides support groups including "HUG" Hanging Up Grief - Childrens Support Group for ages 5-12.

Be sure to visit the Resource pages @ handonline.org for other grief-related support groups in Northern California.

Subsequent Babies

Bella Faith and
 Karis London Chapin
 September 25, 2003
 Devin and Brandy Chapin

Sophia Alexandria Sabedra
 October 2, 2003
 Darren and Brandi Sabedra

Kalia Katherine Hope Velez
 November 16, 2003
 Rhonda and Jason Velez

Please note that the above parents have experienced a loss prior to the birth of these new babies.



Handprints Newsletter

Helping After Neonatal Death
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031

**NON - PROFIT
ORGANIZATION**

U.S. Postage

PAID

MODESTO, CA
Permit No. 628

Page 12

Handprints

Winter 2004

Handprints is a quarterly newsletter for bereaved parents. Contributions or donations made in memory of a special baby are always welcome and support HAND's mission to help grieving families.



Newsletter Subscription Form

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

E-mail address: _____

In Loving Memory of: _____

Donations made in memory of a baby will be acknowledged in the newsletter.

- Check if this is a renewal.
- Check if your address has changed.
- Check to discontinue receiving this newsletter.

HAND provides newly bereaved parents with this newsletter *free* for two years.

If you would like to subscribe, your donation is tax deductible. Please mail this form and your subscription/donation of \$20 or more to the address above.