

COMFORTING FRIENDS

Published monthly by Sacramento Chapter of Friends For Survival, Inc.
A National Outreach Program for Survivors of Suicide Loss
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APRIL 2009

Volume XXVII Issue 4

EDUCATION/SUPPORT MEETINGS

Date: Tues, April 14, 2008
Time: 7:00 to 9:15 PM

Carolyn Curtis, Ph.D., executive director of the Healthy Marriage Project, will be sharing with us suggestions for maintaining family relationships after the trauma of a suicide death. Join us for a special meeting with helpful information /suggestions & with friends who are walking this journey together.
This meeting is always held on the 2nd Tuesday.

FRIENDS FOR SURVIVAL IN GRASS VALLEY

Date: Monday, April 6, 7 – 9 pm

Call Gail Beeman, 530-269-0729

CHRISTIAN SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

Date: Tues. April 21, 7 – 8:30 pm

Call: Marilyn Koenig, 916-392-0664

FRIENDS FOR SURVIVAL IN CHICO

Date: Monday, April 13, 4 – 6 pm

Call: Risa Holt, 530-877-7056
or Jenny Heck, 530-343-8942

FRIENDS FOR SURVIVAL IN GALT

Date: Tues., April 28, 7 – 8:30 pm

Call: Mary Sanders, 209-745-1825
Call Mary for info on special speakers

FRIENDS FOR SURVIVAL IN THE BAY AREA
Meetings are discontinued but Gary is still the contact person: Gary Roberts, 408-947-0888

We have a local support network on the web. www.yahoo.com, list is on the left hand side, click on groups, type in SACRAMENTO_SOS, click on join this group. If you have questions call Bobby, 209-471-1743 or email bharr@shcglobal.net

Check out our new website. Scott Garcia, our webmaster, is updating and add new features regularly. We welcome YOUR comments and suggestion.

You can help us financially by donating your car, truck, RV or boat. Go to our website, www.friendsforsurvival.org for the link to our auto donation program, or call 866-538-7366. If you have questions, please call us at 916-392-0664

You can help us save money when YOU move! We spend up to \$40 each month to receive forwarding addresses (from the post office) for families that have moved. Please notify us in advance, if you can, before you move.

NEWS BETWEEN FRIENDS

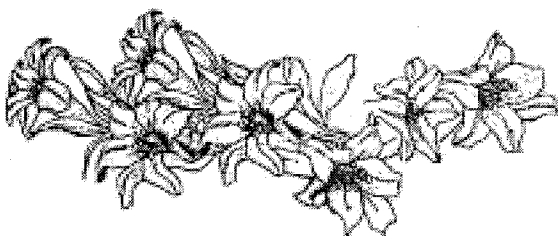
Fifteen volunteers have donated hundreds of hours over the last two years to produce volume 3 of our year of healing project. *Cherished Inspirations from Comforting Friends* is a compilation of the very best articles from 10 years of our newsletters. It is 154 pages and available for a donation of \$20.00 plus \$5 for postage / handling if we mail it to you. They are also available at our meetings. If you find comfort and encouragement from our newsletter, this is for you.

It also makes a great gift for yourself and others.

Please see page 2 of this newsletter for a heartfelt column from one of our newest board members, Vickie Sampson.

There will be some reviews of new books in our next newsletter. Survivors who love to write are courageous to publicly share their journey with the hope of helping others.

There will be a "Walk-a-Thon/Bicycle Run" in the Placerville area for the purpose of suicide prevention. This event will take place Saturday, April 18. Call Vivian, 530-676-2119 for more information.



This year, 2009, Holy Week comes in April. Parents, Tom & Lynda, wanted to share the following in the hopes of encouraging other families. We thank them for sharing something so very personal.

Homily for Justin Thomas Savrine *by Pastor R. Adam Forno, Albany, NY*

March 19, 2008 - Wednesday of Holy Week

What do you say in a homily at a time like this? I thought to myself, I do not know where to begin. So, I prayed to the Holy Spirit and then turned to these words in which I found my inspiration:

I'm glad that I
Live near a tree
Which out my Window
I can see.
And with every
Branch, limb and crease
I find an Artist's
Masterpiece.

That is, of course, Justin's poem written as a 10 year old 4th grader in our SJSJ Academy while he lay sick at home looking out the window of his bedroom. It was the work of a sensitive soul – one in touch with creation and its Maker – God, the Divine Artist.

With all the feelings you have been experiencing as his family, I find myself asking, "Why couldn't Justin find in himself an Artist's Masterpiece?" Why couldn't Justin see the goodness and beauty of who he was? To that there is no answer, We cannot explain the events of that fateful day after his 26th birthday, but we can still offer you – Lynda, Tom, Liz and Phillip – what we have already been giving you since last Wednesday - - our continued support and prayers.

I would like to assure you all of something else; that Justin's death is no one's fault. Not his employer who fired him because he would not lie to a customer, not any of you, not God, the Divine Artist, not even Justin. What happened remains a mystery in the mind of Justin who for a moment failed to see in himself an Artist's Masterpiece.

And as painful as this sounds I need to be clear – Justin did not kill himself. Hitler, a narcissist, arrogant, prideful and cowardly man who was fearful of punishment for his crimes killed himself. Justin, who was a sensitive soul, wounded and bruised was a "victim" of suicide. Justin lost hold of life and hope, and could not believe that God never loses hold of us. Justine could not see that his life and suffering was a share in Christ's life and suffering, and that through Christ there is hope. He forgot for just one moment last Wednesday that Jesus raises us up from all our trials, temptations, disappointments and pain. Just for a moment Justin forgot who he was. But we will never forget. We will remember. And we will do so with great gladness that we knew him and loved him and that while he was on earth, in his own way, Justin

revealed the Artist Masterpiece - - the masterpiece he himself in the end could not see.

So we come here today, this Wednesday of Holy Week and in the context of the passion of Jesus we mourn Justin's unexpected and senseless death. As we remember in a special way the Paschal mystery, that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. We call to mind, as assured by Jesus in this Gospel, that Justin who has died in Christ Jesus will rise on the last day.

We boldly evoke powerful and wonderful memories that Justin's death has brought – for it brings him near. And because these memories bring him so near again, despite the utter agony, profound pain and deep sorrow, we recall Justin and the Artist's Masterpiece that he was.

Justin was everything Ed described in his reflection and more. Justin was the 10 year old kid who wrote that soulful poem. He was the student at SJSJA who befriended those who others denied friendship. Justin was the young man who took in the homeless, ex-gang member who needed help with a new life. Justin was the man of faith that lived the words of Micah: "do what is just, show constant love, and live in humble fellowship with our God."

Justin was also the newly turned 26 year old young man who forgot – through an emotional block, depression or other mental disease – that we may lose hold on a lot of things in this life; but God never loses hold of us. Justin forgot that he is God's beloved: he is the delight of God – he – we are the Artist's Masterpiece

I'm glad that I
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Lynda, you once said if only some good would come from this tragedy it would be easier to accept. Justin's poem as a 10 year old – that reflected his whole being – is his legacy. We are challenged by his words to do what he could no longer do; to gladly peer out of the window of life and see the beauty of the Artist's creating – and to not lose hold of life, mindful that God never loses hold of us. We are the beloved of God, the Divine Artist.

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We also ask Justin to intercede for us as we pray for him. So allow me to end with a prayer for him now using here the words of St. Peter Damian that befits this moment and this most Holy Week:

“Lord, set the seal of your holy cross upon Justin’s soul and cleanse him by its power. By its merits, claim him wholly and entirely for yourself. When you come to judge the world, may its imprints be found upon him. Thus, likened to his Crucified Lord in his sufferings, may Justin be found worthy to share his glorious resurrection.”

Eternal rest grant unto Justin, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of the faithfully departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

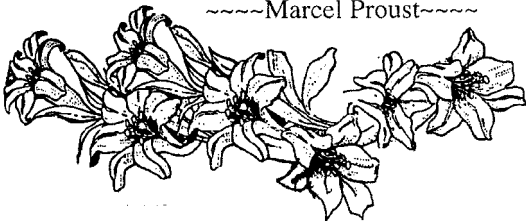


We are usually our own best judge of what we need to be doing as grievers. To be sure, we could often use a nudge from friends – if we’re being too reclusive, for instance. Or maybe we need professional counsel, if we know we’re just not doing well at all. But we don’t need to take seriously the comments of probably well-meaning but ignorant folk who imply that we are being indulged or weak or not “getting over it by now” – whether “now” is six months or six years after the loss has occurred. Every grief has its own timetable, which only the griever knows. And usually the journey through grief is slow and often delayed. Someone once said it takes seven years to adjust to the loss of someone close. So there’s no need to apologize if after many months we are still finding grief a major preoccupation. And there is nothing to be ashamed of if a particularly poignant moment reduces us to tears a very long time after our loved one has died.

*by Martha Whitmore Hickman, Healing After Loss
reprinted from Solace, Gainesville, Fl, Jan. 2009*

.....there is no more ridiculous custom than the one that make you express sympathy once and for all on a given day to a person whose sorrow will endure as long as his life. Such grief, felt in such a way, is always “present,” it is never too late to talk about it, never repetitious to mention it again.

~~~~~Marcel Proust~~~~~



## Spring is Coming

*by Evelyn Billings, TCF, Springfield, MA*

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your “first” spring, you may be surprised by some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear so much about the beauty of spring—the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my “first” year, I expected that spring would cheer me up and make me feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days as life seem to burst forth everywhere, I was “in the pits”. When a friend said to me “Doesn’t a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?” I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day – that the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified.

Gradually, I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives all right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work which we all must do before we can be healed. The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature’s process will continue and that can offer us hope. I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun’s warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, the forsythia, the daffodils and the greening of the world. Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don’t expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.  
*reprinted from LIFELINK, Reno, Nevada, March 2009*

## Thoughts for Springtime

*Would it be easier, if spring were not so lovely?*

*Would it be easier, if robins did not sing?*

*Would I be stronger, if the trees were barren,*

*or if a cloak of gray hid everything?*

*Could I be braver, if the days were faded  
and if the sun remained remote and cold?*

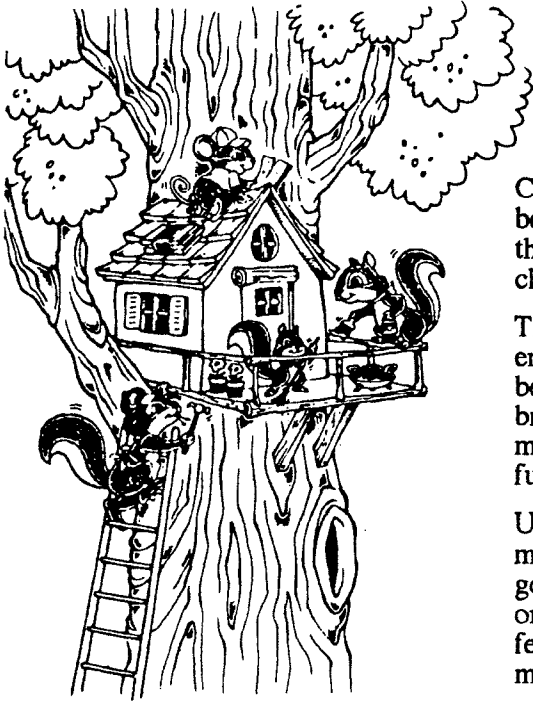
*I hear the whispers of a new beginning.*

*The earth is new.*

*Why is my grief so old?*

*by Sascha Wagner*

# Spring Cleaning



Cleaning the house from top to bottom has traditionally been at least started, if not completed, by housewives in the Spring of the year. I used to follow tradition by cleaning the closets around March.

The cleaning that came later in the Spring was almost enjoyable. The bedding smelled fresh and clean after being outside on the clothesline. The walls looked brighter after being washed. The room seemed to have more light after the windows were cleaned. The furniture looked newer after being polished.

Unfortunately, the closets and cupboards were never much fun. Now they are near impossible. Since he is gone, I can't even open some drawers. One closet is only opened on rare occasions. I clean other areas with fear that each item I uncover will bring another painful memory.

Sorting the items to put back is no easier. I want to keep momentoes of the past, but they won't bring him back. I want to discard old, never-used items, but I can't seem to part with them.

Even if I skip the closets, the part of the cleaning that used to be pleasant is now a chore. I miss his strong arms when turning mattresses or moving heavy items. I can't decide whether to rearrange the furniture. A new arrangement helps me to forget; but would he like it? A new piece of furniture might enhance the appearance of the room; but would he approve?

Even after deciding to part with something, I am sad. I don't want to lose anything else from the past. I've already lost more than I can bear. Why do earthly things need to be replaced? Isn't losing him enough?

After parting with the old and accepting the new, I still have problems adjusting. I want to share my good fortune with him. I want his approval. I want him to enjoy the luxuries.

Why is he gone?

Linda, Ohio  
S.O.S., Dayton, OH, March 1988

MAY YOU LOOK BEYOND THE SORROW OF THIS HOUR  
TO THE BEAUTY OF LOVE WHICH ENDURES FOREVER