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# Helping Hands

Spring 2004

## Joy, sadness fill circle of life

By Alison Mockett Wash

I remember what I learned about Spring as a child: coloring a tree with pink flowers, learning about the birth of baby animals, and singing the rhyme "April showers bring May flowers."

I know that the Spring equinox occurs in March, that many religious occasions, such as Easter, celebrate Spring and new growth and a time of renewal. But since living in the East Bay, I've often felt that same sense of renewal round the beginning of November, with the fall of the first rain.

During the summer, I watch the hills of Mount Diablo turn from golden to a dusty, tired brown. The air grows heavy with the collected exhaust from the refineries in Martinez and from the minivans and SUVs driving kids to swim meets and soccer practice.

By October, there is a sense of expectation; we're ready to turn off our sprinkler systems and unpack the fleece vests. Then the rains come, filling the cracks in the clay-based soil, washing away chalk drawings on our driveways, and clearing the skies so that you can actually see the Golden Gate Bridge when driving through Caldecott Tunnel.

I take my children for a walk at the Lafayette Reservoir and show them the tiny green shoots of new grass, rising bravely from the dense earth. We laughingly make

**Spring** *continued on page 3*

## MOMS study to fight stillbirths

Stillbirth affects more than 4 million women and their babies world wide *every year*, resulting in lost lives and overwhelming grief for mothers, fathers and their families.

A new and first time study called the MOMS (Maternal Observations and Memories of Stillbirth) research study is being conducted by an international group of highly renowned researchers from Oslo University, Norway, Harvard, Yale and others.

Despite many obstetrical advances, most of the medical community still lacks basic knowledge on the causes, risk factors, and psychosocial effects of this tragedy.

**Stillbirth**  
*continued on page 5*

# Mark Your Calendar ...

## Memory Books Craft Night

Bring your own album to fill. Bring any photos, things that remind you of when you were pregnant, a lock of hair, hospital bands, cards people gave you, poems, special paper, stickers, ultrasound pictures, and anything else you would like to use in your baby's memory book (there are special albums available through mail order that are for remembering a baby who has died). Please bring any specialty papers, acid free paper, stickers, pens, and adhesives you need for your album.

**Wednesday, March 24th, 7:30 pm,  
Sequoia Health and Wellness Services  
702 Marshall St., Redwood City**

Contact Kellie Bliss, (510) 792-8421 or email [teakellie@comcast.net](mailto:teakellie@comcast.net) if you have questions.

## Spring Subsequent Parenting Meeting

The Winter Subsequent Parenting meeting was so well attended we are doing it again. Come share your experiences of parenting after a loss.

**Sunday, April 18th 3:30-5 p.m.  
Laureola Park in San Carlos  
(behind the Cal Train Station off  
Old County Road).**

Kids, cookies and snacks to share are welcome. Rain cancels. Please RSVP to Emily Mockett, [emockett@hotmail.com](mailto:emockett@hotmail.com)

## Adoption Night

For parents considering this option, come listen to others who have traveled this path.

**Wednesday, April 28 7:30 p.m.  
Sequoia Health and Wellness Services  
702 Marshall St., Redwood City**

For more information, call HAND's office (650) 367-6993.

## HAND of the Peninsula Annual Human Race Fundraiser

Gather your pledges, family and friends and come walk, jog or run to support HAND's services.

**Saturday, May 8, 8:30 a.m.  
Coyote Point Park**

**1701 Coyote Point Dr. San Mateo**

Each participant receives a race t-shirt and refreshments following the event. To download a pledge form go to: [www.vcsmc.org](http://www.vcsmc.org) or call HAND's office at (650) 367-6993.

## Helping After Neonatal Death

### Chapters:

**HAND of the Peninsula  
P.O. Box 3693  
Redwood City, CA 94064  
(650) 692-6655 crisis line  
(650) 367-6993 office  
Web site: <http://www.handsupport.org>**

**HAND of Santa Cruz Co.  
P.O. Box 3693  
Redwood City, CA 94064  
(650) 367-6993 office  
(831) 438-4513**

**HAND of Santa Clara,  
Contra Costa, Alameda  
Counties, Central Valley  
1-888-908-HAND**

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## Helping Hands

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next issue:**

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**Spring** *continued from page 1*

up a new jingle, “the rains in November mean, that December will be green.”

The hillsides fill up with new growth, painting the landscape with every shade from celadon to emerald to hunter.

This year, I await that renewal with a greater expectation than ever before. Despite the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the year 2002 had started out well for my family.

My youngest sister, newly married, began a great new job and bought a house. Another sister rejoiced in the discovery of her first pregnancy, while her husband, too, started a great new job.

I continued to be thankful for the daily wonders involved in raising three children. Then, last spring, tragedy struck our family with all the ice and force of a winter storm. My youngest sister’s husband died suddenly from a massive heart attack. He was 30 years old, athletic and unsuspecting.

For a family that had always been uncommonly fortunate, grief now had us in its grip. The flowers I remember that spring were ones that came in vases to my sister’s door.

We cried and grappled with unanswerable questions. My sister now stood on the edge of a precipice where

once, stretched out before her, there had been a path.

We managed to move through the crisis, feeling

***“...the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears...The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.”***

Kahlil Gibran — *The Prophet*

grateful for family bonds and strength of community. As summer approached we looked hopefully up to the sun, expecting its warmth.

But there would be no thaw yet. For that summer, my other sister’s baby girl was born with a rare, untreatable, genetic disorder. After three weeks of struggle in the neonatal intensive care unit, she died in her parents’ arms.

I don’t believe there was a reason for these events. But I believe we can find meaning in them in order to move forward. I now have a greater appreciation about life, and I don’t mean an appreciation of life as opposed to death, which may be the cliché, but an appreciation of death *as a part of* life.

Just as life holds great happiness it also holds great sadness. The passage on joy and sorrow in Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* struck me

deeply: “...the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears...The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.”

Yes, I thought, as I read it over and over. It is only because of the depth of our love that we grieve.

I don’t mean this to sound apathetic, like “Oh, that’s life,” but passionate, “this is Life!” with all the honor and awe that I feel towards this world and the life we are given. Recognizing that tragedies sometimes befall us is not fatalistic or cynical but reverent and respectful of our life experience.

We grieve, but I find a small comfort in knowing that a loss can deepen life’s meaning by broadening our experience of it. We may not be grateful for the gift, but it is a gift, nonetheless.

Now, as we approach November, I am ready for the rain. I will go looking for the green shoots in the hills with my children and when we see them, forming borders beside the dirt paths and pushing up among the dry grasses, I will know that Winter is over, and Spring is here.

*Alison Mockett Wash wrote this soon after the death of her niece, Julia Mockett Hutcherson. It first appeared in the Contra Costa Times.*

## Support Meetings

Support meetings are informal gatherings where parents can receive and give support by sharing common experiences as we work through and resolve our loss. We cordially invite you to attend.

Meetings may start out with a topic of discussion, but everyone is free to bring up any questions or aspects of their loss which may concern them.

Attending your first meeting does take courage, but parents who attend find a comforting network of support, encouragement, friendship and understanding.

Nothing is required of you. There are no dues or fees. You need not speak one word. Even if you no longer need the meetings for yourself, come and share your experiences with someone who has recently suffered a loss.

### HAND of the Peninsula

Support meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Celia Hartnett (650) 367-6993

**Time:** 7:30-9:30 P.M.

**Dates:** March 3 and 17  
April 7 and 21  
May 5 and 19  
June 2 and 16

**Location:** Sequoia Health and Wellness Services, 702 Marshall St., Redwood City.

### HAND of Santa Cruz

Support meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Kristie Shulman (831) 438-4513.

**Time:** 7:30-9:30 P.M.

**Dates:** March 17  
April 21  
May 19  
June 16

**Location:** Congregational Church of Soquel

## Pregnancy Support Meetings

Parents who are pregnant again after a loss have special emotional and psychological needs. Pregnancy Support Group meetings address the concerns of bereaved parents who have started or are thinking about starting another pregnancy. Fathers are especially encouraged to attend.

HAND of the Peninsula holds subsequent pregnancy support meetings on the second Wednesdays of the month as needed. Please call the HAND office (650) 367-6993 if you plan to attend or need more information

**Time:** 7:30-9:30 P.M.

**Dates:** March 10  
April 14  
May 12  
June 9

HAND of Santa Cruz' subsequent pregnancy meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Please call (831) 438-4513 for more information.

## Births

**Ainsley Jane and Addison Parker Cornwall** — Aug. 30, 2003, to Jay, Kris and Makenna Cornwall

**Spencer Liam Kanar** — Sept. 5, 2003, to Bryn Kanar and Zan LaHara

**Cole Jacob Mitchell** — Nov. 10, 2003, to Suzanne Gallie and Mark Mitchell

**Emma Nicole Steadman** — Feb. 12 2004, to Kristin and John Steadman

## Donations

Our warmest thanks to those who have sent donations to HAND of the Peninsula. It is through your support that HAND is able to grow and help others.

Shirley and David Guidi, in honor of HAND volunteers Irene and Maia Lustgarten, in loving memory of Talia Elise Nelson Twicken

Louie and Ann Schaffer Miles and Denise Bresee III, in loving memory of Emma Gabriella Bresee Wanda Lee and Ken Allen, in memory of David Lee Allen

Celia Hartnett, in memory of Gregory on his 21st birthday Mary Kate Adair, in honor of Celia Hartnett

Rachel Kindt and Greg Marcus, in honor of Hannah and Rebecca Marcus  
Melisse Lusin, in memory of Blake Charles Holtz

Margaret Quinn, in memory of Thomas Meehan  
Fernando and Carol Marie Vega, in memory of Ruthie Vega

Jeanne Hamel, in memory of Michael Gabriel  
Leslie Muennemann, in memory of Ian's 16th birthday

Chirag Amin and Himanshu Patel, in celebration of Kieran Elrod's birth  
Christine and Michael Reeve, in memory of Edgar and Christian

Mark Mitchell and Suzanne Gallie, in memory of Kyra Moree Mitchell  
Sun Microsystems Matching Gift for Suzanne Gallie

**Donations** *continued on page 5*

## Donations

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Lori and Dave Reddy, in loving memory of Jordan Nicole Reddy  
Edward and Bethany Hannon

Daniel and Margaret Seligson-Victor and Kathleen Parrette

Jacqueline Willson, in memory of MaryKate Holsinger  
Elham Heydari, in loving memory of Neema Shams Heydari  
M. and Alice Pualuan

Connie Maschan, in memory of Jessica Maschan  
Jill Ludwig and Joel Lachter, in loving memory of our babies  
Irene Kennedy

Jill Nelson and Joe Twicken, in loving memory of Talia Elise Nelson Twicken and Isabelle Grace Moeller on their 5th birthdays

Ron Pasion and Carla Altizer  
Mark and Michele Hollar, in memory of William Adam Hollar

Charmane Gonsalves  
Daniel Guidi, in memory of Natalie Guidi

Juan and Franchette Garcia, in memory of Melina Flora and Citali Del Cielo Garcia

Mary and Bill Schorr, in memory of Daniel Patrick Schorr

Emily and John Corpos, in memory of Maria Corpos and Kay Bigot  
Laurie McLucas and Bill Crook, in memory of Henry McLucas Crook

Frank and Shari Elmer, in memory of Nathan and Patrick Elmer  
Eric and Melinda Ruchames, in memory of Zachary Clark

Ruchames' 17th birthday, Jan. 4, 2004

Carl and Joanie King, in memory of Katherine Rogers King  
Ron Gutierrez and Cherie Gollant, in memory of Julia Gollant Gutierrez

Patricia Albeno, in memory of Dorian Armando Mora

Irwin and Esther Nash, in honor of Carl R. Nash, M.D.  
Shirley and Bryce Nelson, in memory of Talia Elise Nelson  
Twicken

Peter and Jana Perkins  
Kristina and Michael Shulman, in memory of Daniel Shulman  
Prasanna and Padmanabhan Menon

## 7 new HAND volunteers receive facilitator training

Celia Hartnett and Emily Corpos, HAND of the Peninsula's cofounders, packed a two-day training course for new volunteers into one very full Saturday, January 24.

Seven new volunteers are now assigned to their respective duties. They are Christina Rivas-Louie, Juliana Scalise (also helping with HAND of Santa Cruz County), Sara Velasquez, Emily Mockett, Chris Anderson-Fawcett, Katya and John Kochergin.

"I cannot begin to tell you how thrilled I am with all your responses to the call for new volunteers," said Celia Hartnett.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. This many HANDS will make very light work!"

## Stillbirth study

*continued from page 1*

The study is being sponsored by the MISS Foundation [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org) and facilitated by the International Stillbirth Alliance [www.stillbirthalliance.org](http://www.stillbirthalliance.org).

These groups, and others around the world, are working to inform mothers about how their participation may lead to new answers in this area. The study is completely confidential and takes an average of 35 minutes to complete.

Both women who have experienced stillbirths and those who have experienced a live birth are invited to report their experience through an online questionnaire. The objective of the MOMS study is to increase our scientific knowledge of stillbirth in order to reduce the number of stillbirths.

While research on stillbirths is intensifying throughout the Western World, collecting and extrapolating data to study from those who actually experience stillbirth is likely to take many years.

It is time to begin to identify clues and formulate reasonable hypotheses so that further, more targeted research on stillbirth can provide much needed information.

To learn more or participate in the study visit [www.momstudy.com](http://www.momstudy.com) or contact the principal investigator:

**J. Frederik Frøen, MD, PhD**  
**Perinatal Research Center**  
**Rikshospitalet University Clinic**  
**University of Oslo**  
**N-0027 Oslo, Norway**  
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