



Helping Hands

Summer 2007

My Path to Healing

By Nina Squillante

HAND of the Peninsula

It has been almost a year since my son Leo was stillborn at 33 weeks. On June 23, 2006, instead of celebrating the birth of our firstborn child, my husband, Art, and I found ourselves in a life we never expected to have, struggling to find our way through the pain and sorrow. Many people have shown their love and support during this time, and for that we are exceptionally grateful. There were also a number of things I found helpful on my path of healing during the first year without Leo.

HAND

My husband and I started attending HAND grief support meetings shortly after we lost Leo, and went regularly for many months. We found it comforting to be somewhere we felt we belonged, where it was appropriate and ex-

pected that we would talk about our baby, and where other people understood what we were going through.

Professional Help

I sought help from a number of professionals. I found a counselor who is kind and committed to helping me heal the past and look forward to the future. I

I've watched the seasons change at the park, and it helps me to accept change. For me, it's meditation and my way of connecting to the earth and not feeling so alone.

see a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine for acupuncture and herbs, and it's made a big difference in how I feel mentally and physically as well as improving my sleep. I also saw a massage therapist, which helped me feel more present

in the physical world and make peace with my body when I felt it had betrayed me.

Reading

Empty Cradle, Broken Heart: Surviving the Death of Your Baby, by Deborah L. Davis, was the most helpful and comforting book I found on the subject, and I still keep it by my bedside. The

writing is compassionate and straightforward, and the quotes from grieving parents help me remember that I'm not alone and my thoughts and feelings are normal. The

poetry of Kahlil Gibran, especially his collection "The Prophet," beautifully describes the balance of opposing forces in our lives. His words are heartbreaking, uplifting and comforting, and they touch me deeply.

Healing *continued on page 3*

eScrip is effortless way to support grieving families

Imagine raising hundreds of dollars a year to benefit HAND of the Peninsula without doing anything other than shop as usual.

eScrip is a fundraising program that allows participating merchants to contribute a percentage of your grocery loyalty card, credit card, and debit/ATM card purchases to HAND of the Peninsula.

There is no cost at all to you. Simply register any or all of your cards for use in the program, and specify HAND of the Peninsula (**eScrip ID 141808774**) as your organization of choice. Then, participating merchants will automatically transfer a percentage of your purchases to HAND each and every month. Since eScrip was introduced in 1999 by Electronic Scrip Inc., ESI has distributed over \$120 million to schools and non-profit organizations such as ours.

Complete information on the eScrip program is available at www.escrip.com. Registration may be completed at the same site. Questions about HAND's participation in the eScrip program may be directed to info@HANDsupport.org or (650) 367-6993.

We urge all of our families, relatives and friends to participate in this great and effortless fundraising program. Remember to keep your eScrip registration current anytime your registered card numbers change or you change cards. eScrip contributions to HAND on behalf of our participating families have ranged up to \$350 per family per year!

Helping After Neonatal Death Chapters:

HAND of the Peninsula
P.O. Box 3693
Redwood City, CA 94064
(650) 579-0350 crisis line
(650) 367-6993 office
<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

Copyright©2007 HAND of the Peninsula, except when noted otherwise. Articles may be reprinted with acknowledgement of the source. Newsletter itself may not be reproduced or transmitted by any means without the express permission of HAND of the Peninsula. Address all correspondence regarding this newsletter to: Editor, Helping Hands Newsletter, P.O. Box 3693, Redwood City, CA 94064.

Helping Hands

Editor: Leslie Muennemann
leslie@muenn.net

Contributors: Joe Twicken
Nina Squillante
Celia Hartnett

Printing: P.J. Hawkins
ltp11@sbcglobal.net

Submission deadline for next issue:

AUG. 15, 2007

Healing *continued from page 1*

Drawing

When Leo died I felt like my creativity had died, too. When I tried to do anything artistic, it felt forced and empty. I finally started to let go and let whatever came to me flow onto the page. Many of the early drawings are dark, heavy scribbles and scratches that left deep grooves in the paper. As time passed I used more colors and different types of pencils, pens and inks. The patterns are flowing, repetitive lines of loops that almost look like writing. It's as if there are no words to truly express what I'm feeling, but the act of getting them onto paper has been a way to express myself and get back in touch with my creativity.

Walking in Nature

There's a local park I often visit where I can hike until my thoughts drop away and I start to notice the sky and clouds, plants, wildflowers, and wildlife. The earth and air smell fresh and alive, especially after a rain. I've watched the seasons change at the park, and it helps me to accept change. For me, it's meditation and my way of connecting to the earth and not feeling so alone.

A Special Place

We spread Leo's ashes in the ocean at our favorite beach. We've visited that beach many times in the past year, and whenever we have a milestone to pass we know we have a place to go that makes sense to us. I keep a vase of dried lavender by my bed, and we always take some to toss into the waves. My heart breaks open every time, but I always feel a sense of peace by the time we leave, knowing that Leo is in a place where the ocean, the land, and the sky come together in breathtaking beauty.

My wish for everyone who is grieving a loss is that you find the things that help you through the dark times and bring you comfort, peace and hope.

Donations

Shoneen and John Erskine, in memory of Jessica Luck Erskine

Linda Thompson and Tom Jones, in memory of Emily Thompson Jones

Joanne and Michael Regalia

Celia and Donald Hartnett,

Amy and Harlin Hansen, in memory of Jake Wilcox

Robin and David Costa, in memory of Alec Robert Costa's 9th birthday

Esther and Saul Twicken, Irene and Maia

Lustgarten, in memory of Talia Nelson Twicken

Su-Mien Chong and Kyle Elrod

Maureen O'Connor, in memory of granddaughter Samantha Chong Elrod

Margo and Andrew Meiman

Patricia Murphy, Lloyd, Peter and Juliet Steadman, in memory of Craig Steadman

Twila Forbes, in memory of Cosmo

Carolyn and Gerald Dybsetter, in memory of Emily Dybsetter on her 9th birthday

Eileen, Ronald, Pat, Sean and Joe Wilcox, in memory of our Little Jake

Google Matching Gifts Program, matching gift for donation by **Shoneen and John Erskine**

Gigi and Joe Casey, in memory of Timothy **Sharon and John Manning**

Anne Graham

Bank of America Matching Gifts, matching gift for donation by **Joan Gallagher**

Silvia Zerbato, in memory of Baby Stevie Garcia on his 8th birthday

Wai Yan Lam, in memory of Laeticia Mei Bossuwe

Sallye McKenzie, in memory of Natalie Guidi and in honor of Laurie London

Tri Gamma Nursing Sorority

Human Race Donations

Nancy and Richard Sciutto

Susan and Shannon Lee, Annette and Dan

Gracia, Beverly and Donald Olaver, Jill

Nelson and Joseph Twicken

Irene and Maia Lustgarten

Laurie Polivy

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 losses. 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 losses 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 Wednesdays of the month. Contact: Jill Ludwig (650) 367-6993.

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

Dates: June 6 and 20
July 4 **No Meeting**
July 18

Aug. 1 and 15
Sept. 5 and 19

Location: Ellsworth Room at Mills Health Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., San Mateo

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: June 20
July 18
Aug. 15
Sept. 19

Location: Congregational Church of Soquel

Pregnancy Support Meeting

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 sup-

port meetings on the second Wednesday of the month on an as needed basis. 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: June 13
July 11
Aug. 8
Sept. 12

Location: Ellsworth Room at Mills Health Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., San Mateo

HAND of Santa Cruz

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

Births

Ellis Andrew Hoppe — April 17, 2007, to Jennifer and Carlen Hoppe

Isaac Solomon Lachter — April 28, 2007, to Jill Ludwig and Joel Lachter and big brother Benjamin

Inservice

March 27 — Nursing Mothers Counsel, San Mateo Chapter, Joan Stone, presenter, Laurie London, sharing parent

Memorial service readings compiled

By **Celia Hartnett**

Co-founder HAND of the Peninsula

I preface this article by emphasizing that HAND is a non-denominational organization with no particular religious affiliations where all are welcome. HAND has an impeccable record of acceptance of all faiths, beliefs and cultures.

That having been said, I DO know from listening to bereaved families over the past 24 years that for many of them, the matter of their faith figures prominently in their grieving process. Recently a family asked me to assist in putting together a memorial service for their beloved baby boy. They specifically sought passages from the Bible to include in the readings. Since I could not find my HAND files, no doubt due to the disorganized state of my home office, I was forced to go back to the source and do a bit of research for appropriate readings.

It occurred to me afterwards that perhaps there are other families out there who would appreciate being able to locate these passages for their own purposes and that it might be helpful for me to share the ones I found. I've copied them below from the King James version of the Bible. The exact wording may vary in other versions.

Please know that I offer these simply in the hopes that it will help those families who seek some comfort from the Bible. I am sure the HAND newsletter would welcome similar contributions from people of other faiths.

Jeremiah Ch 31

15: Thus saith the LORD: A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted because her children were no more.

16: Thus saith the LORD, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

Matthew Ch 18

1: At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2: And Jesus called a little child unto him, and

set him in the midst of them,

3: And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4: Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5: And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

10: Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven, their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

11: For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost.

12: How think ye? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13: And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14: Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Mark Chapter 10

14: Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God.

16: And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Lastly, I retell the following story in my own words. It is from **2 Samuel Ch 12** Verses 16 – 24 and is about the death of the infant child of David and Bathsheba. Their baby becomes gravely ill. David prostrates himself and prays for the baby's recovery, but the baby dies. David arises from his grieving, comforts Bathsheba, and together they have another son, Solomon, whom the Lord loved. If you are familiar with the Bible, you will know what a great and wise king Solomon became.

The point of this story is NOT that our children are replaceable ... we know that they are NOT. Instead, it is really a story about HOPE. The message is that if we have the courage to pick up the pieces of our lives and go on, we make it possible for great and positive things to rise from the ashes, and for joy to return into our lives.