



# Helping Hands

Spring 2016

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## Original Mother's Day Honored Bereaved Mother

By Carly Marie Dudley

<http://carlymarieprojectheal.com/>

Mother's Day is a day of the year that we come together to celebrate all the mothers around the world. It's a day that is supposed to bring joy, recognition, love and appreciation to these incredible women that do so much for humanity. If you have experienced the death of one or more of your children, struggle to conceive a child or are unable to fall pregnant at all, this day can often bring up feelings of isolation, unworthiness, pain and sadness. Much of society has forgotten the true meaning of Mother's Day and fails to support and recognize all true mothers.

### The History of Mother's Day

American **Anna Jarvis**, founded the official day in 1908 to honor her own mother, Ann Jarvis, who gave birth to around a dozen children. Only four survived to grow into adults. Most of her children died from diseases such as the measles and typhoid fever. Daughter Anna succeeded in convincing President Woodrow Wilson to make the day official when in 1914 he signed a congressional resolution making the second Sunday in May, National Mother's Day

With such heartfelt and meaningful roots, it is devastating to see how, through the years, the true meaning of Mother's Day has been lost and transformed by commercial interests. The worst thing is that bereaved mothers are usually completely forgotten.

Mother's Day was created in honor of a bereaved mother. It's time to take our day back to its roots. For us to educate the rest of society on the true meaning of Mother's Day, we must use our voices. We become mothers the very moment we open our hearts to the idea of conceiving a child. Let us remind people of this truth.

### International Bereaved Mother's Day

In 2010, I felt drawn to create International Bereaved Mother's Day to help heal women around the world with Mother Hearts that are hurting. This is also a day for us to educate society about the true meaning of Mother's Day. International Bereaved Mother's Day is a temporary movement. It is a heart-centered attempt at healing the official Mother's Day. I believe that we can do this and that sometime in the near future there will be no need for this day at all because all true mothers will be recognized, loved, supported and celebrated. Sunday May 1, 2016, get together with your closest friends and family and celebrate your beautiful Mother Heart. Celebrate your babies and children. Lets speak about the true meaning of Mother's Day. Let us start some healing conversations.

## *Grieving mom spurred to support others*

After experiencing the stillbirth of our beautiful son Christian, my world came crashing down. I felt as if my soul left my body. I was weak. I was numb. I lost a lot of weight. I stopped living and started existing. I stopped answering the phone. I put down my paint brushes. I closed up all the doors and windows and I shut myself off from the real world. I was dead inside. I felt like my life had ended too.

After 18 months of trying to make sense of Christian's death, I dreamed of him for the first time. I felt a deep connection to him. When I woke up from this dream, I felt my blood begin to pump around my weary body again. My soul light was reignited. He was okay. He was more than okay. He was living a full and amazing life, just somewhere else across time and space.

The dream that I had inspired me to visit the beach and write Christian's name in the sand. On August 19, 2008, Christian's Beach was born and our lives were changed again forever. Since that day, back in the Winter of 2008, over 23,000 children's names have been written in the sand at sunset on Christian's Beach. You can now find most of my Beach Art and Memorial Beach Photographs [here](#).

Over the last few years I have felt led to share my experience with others walking the road of pregnancy, infant and child loss and so **Bereaved Mothers Day**, **Bereaved Fathers Day** and **August 19th – Day of Hope** was created.

When your world is turned upside down by the death of your precious child, it really does feel like your world has ended too and in a way, it has. Finding joy or even thinking about having a beautiful life again seems impossible. Sit with your grief. Allow the darkness to fall upon you, but know that you do not have to stay there forever. Healing is real and waiting for anyone who desires it. It comes in many different shapes and forms. The trick is to find what it is that heals you. Take your time.

Healing is possible when you are mindful about the importance of self care, self love and self growth. Become conscious about your healing. Healing becomes powerful with intention. Remember to take moments each day just to stop and observe what your heart is feeling. Stand outside in the Earth. Get fresh air everyday and open your heart to the beauty that this world holds for you.

Project Heal is my place of healing and transformation, growth and learning. It is my place to come and write about my heart-work, my life, what is inspiring me, what I am working on, what my children are teaching me, what this life is teaching me. I write often at my **Facebook page**, it is filled with my photographs and stories. Project Heal is not just about healing from this terribly dark experience. It is about growing into your life again. It is about reconnecting to yourself and discovering new ways of life. We live not only for ourselves now but for our children too. You can connect with me on **Periscope**. I host live video chats and

## Helping After Neonatal Death

### Chapters:

HAND of the Peninsula

HAND of Santa Cruz

HAND of San Francisco

P.O. Box 3693  
Redwood City, CA 94064  
(650) 579-0350 crisis line  
(650) 367-6993 office  
[www.HANDsupport.org](http://www.HANDsupport.org)

Helping After Neonatal Death  
Santa Clara and Alameda Counties,  
and part of the Central Valley  
P.O. Box 341  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341  
(888) 908-HAND (4263)  
[www.handonline.org](http://www.handonline.org)

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### Helping Hands

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**Contributors:** Carly Marie Dudley  
Annette Mennen Baldwin

**Submission deadline:**  
**MAY 1, 2016**

discussions on grief and healing. Everyone is welcome to join in.

If you are newly bereaved, a lot of my work may not resonate with you and that is simply because we are in different times or stages, but later down the road you may find yourself in a different place where my work does speak to your heart so I welcome you to come back at any time.

I have written so much about my son that I have planted his story into the ground. It's rooted deep in the Earth, intertwined amongst the trees and rivers. The Earth knows his story now, he will not be forgotten. He will be remembered long after I become ash myself.

Since Christian died, I had always identified myself with his loss. I didn't know who I was outside of my grief. I now am on the road to creating my beautiful life I am discovering my purpose. It's a beautiful and exciting point to be at, to be living an inspired life. I hope I can share that with you, I hope you feel that connection to life at some point too. I feel so many of us lose our identity through our grief and so we cling to it. We don't know who we are outside of it. We let it become us.

The truth is that grief is a part of me. I have accepted that, but it is not all of me. I hope my work empowers others to rediscover themselves as well.

## Tips on not just surviving Mother's Day but celebrating it

**1: Look After Yourself:** Be gentle on yourself and do what is right for you. If that means saying no to the family dinner, then so be it. You may disappoint people, but how people choose to react to your decision or choice is not your responsibility.

**2: Comfort Yourself:** Spend the day doing things that comfort your heart. You may want to go for a walk in the fresh air or visit the beach. Soak in a bath. Go out with your best friend for lunch. Or maybe retreating with ice-cream and movie sounds best to you. Surround yourself with loving people who if not understand what you have been through, accept it.

**3: Honor Your Child/Journey:** Bringing ritual into your journey can help with healing. You may want to create a space in your home to remember your child, or honour the journey you are on. Light a candle, put up some beautiful images and allow the space to be a place of reflection and healing for you.

**4: Seek Out Support:** Whether that support is from friends or family or from resources or support groups online, it does not matter. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It shows that you are taking responsibility for your healing and that is a beautiful strength.

## My wishes for you this Mother's Day

My wish for you all is that through this special day you feel recognized as mothers. You are all worthy of the title. Truly you are. I hope you feel honoured this year, if not by your friends and family members, than by the millions of women out there around the world who empathize and understand what you are going through. I hope you feel empowered to share your own hearts and stories and help us to make a change in society so that we can bring the true meaning of Mother's Day back. Whatever you do, wherever you are on this day, I send you my love. You are all beautiful mothers.

## Tips on how to help a bereaved mother on Mother's Day

**1. Acknowledge:** Think about the women in your life. Do you know if they have suffered a loss? Have they struggled to conceive a child? Are they unable to fall pregnant? It does not matter what they have faced, they still deserve love and recognition for being the beautiful mothers that they are. In the words of Franchesca Cox, "A mother is not defined by the number of children you can see, but by the love that she holds in her heart." Sometimes a few simple heartfelt words in a card/letter/sms/email is all it takes to help lift the spirits of a mother hurting this Mother's Day. "You are a beautiful mother." or "You have a beautiful Mother Heart." "You are an honor to your children." "This world needs more mothers like you." A simple "I am thinking of you today." is perfect. Extend as much love as you can and if you can give that mother a hug in person, even better.

**2. Speak Their Child's Name:** This is so important. People are often afraid to say their child's name because they feel like they will be reminding the mother of what happened. Us mothers, we never forget. One of our biggest fears is that our children will be forgotten, so speak their names. It is one of the greatest gifts you could give.

**3. Hold Space and Listen:** Spend some time with your friends and family. Hold a safe space for them. Ask them how they are doing and really listen to them. You do not have to offer your advice, truth is, if you have not experienced what they have, it probably isn't going to help anyway. Sometimes all we need is someone to listen to us. You do not need to fix your loved one, you just need to love them.

**4. Honor Their Journey and/or Child:** There are a few things that you can do to make this day special. Firstly, if your friend has experienced the death of one or more of their children, you could do something in memory of them. A few ideas could be, planting a tree or giving the mother a tree to plant in their honor. You could give the mother a piece of memorial jewelry that features her child's name. You could make a donation to a charity in their honor.



# 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:** (650) 367-6993

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

**Dates:** March 2 and 16  
April 6 and 20  
May 4 and 18  
June 1 and 16

**Location:** Follow signs to Palm Room at Mills Health and Wellness 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:** March 16  
April 20  
May 18

June 16

**Location:** Congregational Church of Soquel

## HAND of San Francisco

Meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

**Contact:** (415) 282-7330

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 P.M.

**Dates:** March 2 and 16  
April 6 and 20  
May 4 and 18  
June 1 and 16

**Location:** Davies Campus of CPMC, Castro at Duboce six blocks north of Market Street. Enter the North Tower lobby, follow the HAND signs from the Info Desk to our meeting room.

# 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

Subsequent pregnancy support meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at Mills Health and Wellness Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., in San Mateo. **Please RSVP if you plan to attend.**

**Contact:** (650) 367-6993.

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

**Dates:** March 9  
April 13  
May 11  
June 8

## HAND of Santa Cruz

Subsequent pregnancy meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Congre-

gational Church of Soquel.

**RSVP** is appreciated. **Contact:** Kristie Shulman (831) 438-4513

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

**Dates:** March 2  
April 6  
May 4  
June 1

# Births

**George Arthur Reitano** -- Oct., 2015, to Melissa and John Reitano, and big sister Lucia Faith

**Nova Trinity Martin** -- Nov., 2015, to Deirdre and Kai Martin

# 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.

**Penny and Jay Crespo**

**Celia and Donald Hartnett**, in memory of Gregory Harnett, born in December, 1982

**Teri and John Hastings**, in memory of Lauren Hastings

**Amanda L. Anderson**

**Jennifer Tan and John Inouye**

**Zoe Hunton and Cameron McClure**, in memory of precious twins, Aiden Hunton and Bowen Hunton McClure

**Kimberly Pignolet and Greg Nerpouni**

**Sarah Sharafkandi and Alireza Razavi**

**Ofri and Jonathan Aizen**

**Dimka Atanassov and Hilaf Hasson**

**Susan Blanco and Jeff Morton**

**Cindi Gray**

**Charli Hoffman and Robert Chase**

**Paula Jo Husack, MA, LMFT, CGP**

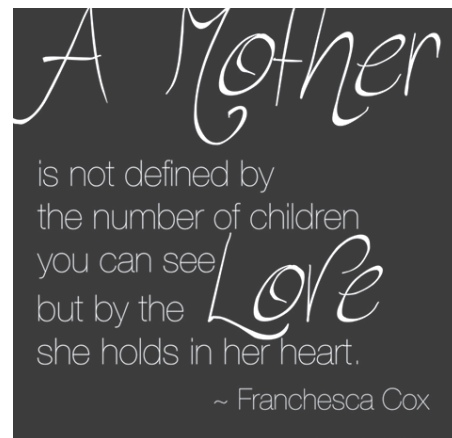
**Katherine and Alex Katz**

**Rachel Kindt and Gregory Marcus**

**Barbara Kirsch, PhD**  
**Carolyn Laub and Heather Tumey**  
**Wanda Lee and Kenneth Allen**  
**Michal and Brad Levin**  
**Irene and Maia Lustgarten**, in loving memory of Talia Elise Nelson Twicken  
**Ariane and LaDonrick Powell**  
**Nidhi Rajput and Suken Shah**, in memory of Gudia Shah  
**Melissa Yeh and Warren Chiang**  
**Jane Zimmerman, LCSW**  
**James Fox**  
**Elizabeth Mier and Kenny Aptekarev**, in memory of Lola Simone Aptekarev  
**Natasha and Chike Agbai**  
**Laura and Ken Bevington**  
**Christina Conklin and Richard McCluney**  
**Lisa and Andrew Cope**, in memory of Charles Joseph Cope  
**Katherine Folger**  
**Cheryl Gagliasso and David Belshaw**, in honor of Emily and John Corpos  
**Franchette and Juan Garcia**  
**Anne Graham**, in memory of Leo Squillante  
**Erica and Eddie Hernandez**, in memory of Daniel Craig Hernandez  
**Jane and Mark Hoppe**, in memory of Andrew and Benjamin Hoppe  
**Judy Kele**, in memory of Chance Kele  
**Patricia Leeper and Craig Ball**  
**Sofia Linan and Kyle Najarian**, in memory of Harold Francisco Najarian  
**Kathryn and Arthur Mesh**, in memory of Ethan Mesh  
**Jill Nelson and Joseph Twicken**, in memory of Talia Elise Nelson Twicken on her 17th birthday  
**Paula and Joe Osorio**, in memory of Alexis Marlene Osorio  
**Kathleen and Victor Parrette**, in memory of Malorie Anne Parrette  
**Barbara and Russell Reed**, in memory of LaMaya Rain Powell  
**Deborah Robinson**, in memory of Sean Patrick  
**Melinda and Eric Ruchames**, in memory of Zachary Clark Ruchames  
**Mary and William Schorr**, in memory of Daniel Patrick Schorr  
**Kristina Scott and David Pollack**, in memory of Danielle  
**Sonya and Paul Seregin**, in memory of David, Mathew and Marc Seregin  
**Marie and John Violet**  
**Susan Gulbe Walsh and Tim Walsh**, in memory of Willow Jane Gulbe Walsh on her 6th birthday

## Anticipating Mother's Day

By Annette Mennen Baldwin  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>



As Mother's Day approaches, I think of our newly bereaved parents who will be facing their first or possibly second Mother's Day without their child. I remember my first Mother's Day without my son. It was, quite frankly, a sad day for me. But I got through it and a few days later, I got through his birthday as well. In our first year of grief each milestone seems to mark distance from our children. We count that distance in minutes, hours, days, weeks and months.

How we spend Mother's Day is strictly a unique decision made by each parent, each mother. There are no rules. While we all walk this grief road together, we each walk it in our unique way. No two people grieve in the same way, because no two people are alike.

Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days past with our own mothers . . . gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship.

With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most

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## **New Chapter of HAND Forming!**

**HAND of the North Bay** will be offering monthly bereavement support groups in San Rafael, facilitated by bereaved parents who have completed HAND of the Peninsula's Volunteer Training. For more information about this new chapter, please call (650) 367-6993 or email [info@HANDsupport.org](mailto:info@HANDsupport.org) and check [HAND's website](#) under the "Meetings" tab.

### **HAND Board Bids Farewell to Longtime HAND Parents**

The HAND Board of Directors would like to THANK Leslie and Frank Muennemann for their nearly thirty years of most generous and compassionate service to bereaved families.

Leslie and Frank began attending HAND support meetings in March 1988, when co-founder Celia Hartnett was facilitating the meetings at the Congregational Church in Belmont.

Their middle son, Ian Gregory, died at 10 days of age in March 1988. They have two living sons, Ansel, 30, and Stephen, 26. For nearly 20 years, Leslie single-handedly edited the quarterly newsletter, collected the printed copies from Lasky Printing in Belmont, and delivered them to Kainos Training Center in Redwood City, where labels were attached and the newsletters were then mailed.

These newsletters have given comfort, encouragement, and connection to hundreds of bereaved families. Leslie and Frank both facilitated support group meetings for many years, and worked the grill at volunteer picnics. They helped organize our annual Service of Remembrance. One year, Frank put the service's program together and year after year, Leslie filled and handed out tiny bags with wildflower seeds for scattering after the service.

Leslie served for many years on HAND's Board of Directors, made presentations to community groups about baby-loss, and managed many requests for funeral assistance. Leslie responded to countless crisis calls, supported families in both Spanish and English, and she's been an integral and invaluable leader in the HAND family.

We love and miss them and we wish them happiness!

**THANK YOU LESLIE and FRANK!!**