



# Helping Hands

Spring 2009

## Love, kindness and inspiration

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By **Elham Raoufian**  
*HAND of Antioch*

I was working out at Curves when I learned about this essay contest: Write about an Inspiring Woman Who has Touched My Heart? Who could I possibly write about? Who has really touched my life? Of course, there are many close family members and wonderful friends that I can probably write a book about. However, I was looking for one particular woman who has had a great impact in my life. One who is outstanding, kind and unconditionally loving and caring?

My thoughts went back to seven years ago when the most unexpected shocking and sad thing happened to my husband and me. We were still newly weds full of joy and happiness and I was pregnant with our first child. Despite the difficulties that came with the pregnancy, I was happy to tolerate them. I was willing to do anything to have a healthy baby.

We had just found out that "It was a boy" when I went into premature labor and delivered

our precious baby boy, Neema. It all happened too fast and he was born too early. I was supposed to hear him cry. I was supposed to hold him in my arms. But he was taken away to the NICU and I was rushed to surgery to stop the hemorrhaging.

When I awoke, all I wanted was my baby. They pushed my bed into his room and my heart dropped when I saw all the wires that were attached to my little guy. He was supposed be inside me.

He died in my arms eight days later. We went home empty handed. We weren't ready for this! We had just reg-

istered at Toys R Us, but now, we were picking a color for the smallest casket available.

After the funeral, it was as if nothing had happened. Every one avoided talking about our baby and they wanted me to be okay, but how could I ever be okay again? All I had was a small gravestone to take care of. Each day was spent wondering

*All I know are  
her first and last  
names. I don't  
even know where  
she lives. But I  
do know how  
kind she is.*

**Touched** *continued on page 3*

## **HAND of the Peninsula**

# *Six complete HAND volunteer training*

HAND of the Peninsula co-founder Celia Hartnett, co-president Kristie Shulman, and board member Jill Ludwig conducted a volunteer training session on January 31, 2009.

Completion of the training session enables participants to facilitate HAND meetings and provide telephone support. The six volunteers who completed the training are: Katherine Folger (HAND of Santa Cruz County), Chris Lehr, LCSW (HAND of San Francisco), and Juliana Salfiti, Frank Muennemann, Ellen Kelly Daley and Linda Sonne-Harrison (HAND of the Peninsula).

## **Book donations and reviews wanted**

Do you have a book that you found particularly useful after the loss of your baby? HAND of the Peninsula welcomes donations of current books to update our lending library. We are also soliciting book reviews to help other parents find the right book for them.

Please email book reviews to [info@HANDsupport.org](mailto:info@HANDsupport.org). Put "HAND Book Review" as the subject, and be sure to list the name and author of the book along with your review. Send new or used books to:

HAND of the Peninsula  
Attn: Library Donation  
P.O. Box 3693  
Redwood City, CA 94064-3693

You can also bring your books to any HAND meeting. We encourage parents to write a special message in the book itself. Write a message to your baby, other HAND parents, or even share a poem.

## **Helping After Neonatal Death**

### **Chapters:**

**HAND of the Peninsula**

**HAND of Santa Cruz County**

**HAND of Antioch**

**HAND of San Francisco**

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

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

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### **Helping Hands**

**Editor:** Leslie Muennemann  
[leslie@muenn.net](mailto:leslie@muenn.net)

**Contributor:** Elham Raoufian

**Proofreaders:** Joe Twicken  
Nina Squillante  
Jennifer Hoppe

**Printing:** P.J. Hawkins  
[ltpl1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ltpl1@sbcglobal.net)

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## **Touched** *continued from page 1*

how he would have looked, sounded or been?

After a few painfully lonely weeks, we were told about a grief support group called HAND of the Peninsula (Helping After Neonatal Death). That was where I found out that I wasn't alone! I met new grieving parents at almost every meeting twice a month.

*She must have known how scared I was. I couldn't bear the pain of another loss. She was there to comfort me and give me Hope.*

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The facilitators were three wonderful women who had lost their babies years ago. I learned how dedicated they were to this support group in their baby's honor. They were there for us rain or shine.

Once I started feeling a little better and I was able to manage the pain, I wanted to give back to HAND. So, I started volunteering my time for this fantastic organization. I felt like I was honoring my baby. Unfortunately, we moved to Antioch and it was too far for me to commit my time so I had to resign after about a year.

At that time, we had been trying to get pregnant for a few months. The doctors found lots of conditions with my body that made me a high risk patient. We tried for almost three years and I was finally pregnant again.

I was scared to death. I shared the good news with the wonderful friends I had made at HAND. They were the only ones who knew what it meant to be pregnant after a loss. They knew what it was like to just be pregnant and be scared to expect a living baby. They were all so happy for us. They tried their best to support me to get through it.

Amongst these lovely women, there was Celia (Hartnett, co-founder of HAND of the Peninsula). She is the one who touched my heart. All I know about Celia are her first and last names. I don't even know where she lives. But I do know how kind she is.

During my second pregnancy, she would send me supportive emails on a daily basis. She would treat me as if I were her immediate family. I was on strict bed rest and as I was getting closer to the end of my second trimester, I asked Celia if she would be there for me, if things started going wrong. Below are her exact words from an email:

*"Of course you can count on me. I would come at once, any time, night or day, if you need me. Here are all the phone numbers you would need to reach me immediately:*

*Home#... home office#.... cell#... work#...  
My great wish is that having these numbers next to your phone will help you to let go of just a tiny little bit of the fear."*

*She must have canceled all her plans for the day just for me. She didn't even know me that well, but she went out of her way to be there for me.*

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I went into premature labor again at 23 weeks. I asked my sister-in-law to call Celia and let her know I was in labor, but that she didn't have to come. I just wanted her to know.

Celia was called at 10 p.m. and I was surprised to see her standing by my bed at 7 the next morning. She must have driven more than an hour to get to my hospital in Berkeley. I started crying. She must have known how scared I was.

I couldn't bear the pain of another loss. She was there to comfort me and give me Hope. She came again that same evening.

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## 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 4 and 11  
April 1 and 15  
May 6 and 20  
June 3 and 17

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

### HAND of Santa Cruz Co.

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 11  
April 15  
May 20  
June 17

**Location:** Congregational Church of Soquel

## New Chapters

### HAND of Antioch

Support meetings are held on the first and third Thursday of the month. Contact Elham Raoufian, (925) 437-3406 for location.

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

**Dates:** March 5 and 19  
April 2 and 16  
May 7 and 21  
June 4 and 18

### HAND of San Francisco

Support meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Contact: Chris Lehr, LCSW (415) 282-733

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

**Dates:** March 4 and 18  
April 1 and 15  
May 6 and 20  
June 3 and 17

**Location:** Davies Campus California Pacific Medical Center, Support Service Conference Room, Level B, Castro at Duboce Streets, San Francisco

## 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 at Mills Health and Wellness Center, 100 S. San Mateo Dr., in San Mateo. Contact: (650) 367-6993.

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

**Dates:** March 11  
April 8  
May 13  
June 10

HAND of Santa Cruz subsequent pregnancy meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Contact: Kristie Shulman (831) 438-4513

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

**Dates:** March 4  
April 1  
May 6  
June 3

**Location:** Congregational Church of Soquel

## Inservice

**De Anza College nursing students** — Feb. 2, 2009, at O'Connor Hospital in San Jose.

Presenter and Sharing Parent: Jennifer Hoppe

## 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.

**Lili Saki and Vahideh Milani**, in loving memory of Neema Shams Heydari and Ideen Alex Heydari

**Susan and Shannon Lee**, in memory of Natalie

**Rebecca Lombardo**, in memory of Monica Marie Lombardo

**James Wevley**

**Irene and Maia Lustgarten**, in loving memory of Talia Elise Nelson Twicken

**Jane Zimmerman, LCSW**  
**Peter and Judith Mason Benson**  
**Katie and Jack Gallagher**

**Donations** *continued on page 5*

## **Touched** *continued from page 3*

The labor had stopped, but I was supposed to stay in the hospital for a while. Celia was in touch with me everyday by phone, and I was thankful for that.

Five days later, I went into labor again and they couldn't stop it this time. I have no idea how Celia found out, all I know is that she was there less than 2 hours after the labor started. She must have canceled all her plans for the day just for me. She didn't even know me that well, but she went out of her way to be there for me.

She held my hands while I screamed in agony from both the physical and emotional pain. She made it easier for me to go through the contractions and the twelve hours of labor. She wiped my tears off my face as I delivered my second little perfect boy... 10 fingers, 10 toes...even hair...

I held my baby boy, Ideen, for an hour before he died in my arms. I know lots of family and

friends were there for me in the room and they all cried with me and my husband for our second loss. I don't remember much of what went on around me that day...But I do remember that Celia was there.

After the funeral, I thought about Celia and what she did for me. I also thought about all the people who were in the room that day. I probably would have been there for all of them if they needed me. But would I have been there for Celia? Would anybody else in the room be there for someone they hardly knew?

Celia has touched my heart with her kindness and her beautiful smile in every possible way. I felt like she was an angel the day I met her. I know Celia has touched many lives in the past 20 years. Celia is an angel on Earth and I thank God for her.

**Elham Raoufian facilitates HAND of Antioch, Her son Neema Shams Heydari was born on Oct. 26 and died Nov. 3, 2001. Son Ideen Alex Heydari, was born on July, 25, 2005, and died shortly after birth.**

## **Donations**

*continued from page 4*

**Celia and Donald Hartnett**, in honor of Shirley Guidi in appreciation of all you do for HAND

**Patricia Leeper and Craig Ball**

**Gina and Daniel Guidi**, in memory of Natalie Guidi

**Prasanna Menon, M.D.**, in memory of Kawin Rupair

**Melinda and Eric Ruchames**, in memory of Zachary Clark Ruchames

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

**Rachel Kindt and Gregory Marcus**, in memory of Marcus baby twins and third baby

**Anu and Peter Minocha**, in memory of Kavin Minocha

**Kristina Scott and David Pollack**, in memory of Danielle Luise

**Alicia and Tom Zigterman**

**Christy Conklin and Richard McCluney**

**Michele and Mark Hollar**, in memory of William Adam Hollar

**Jill Nelson and Joseph Twicken**, in memory of Talia Elise Nelson Twicken on her 10th birthday

**Kristie and Michael Shulman**, in memory of Daniel Shulman

**Laura and Ken Bevington  
John Stratford  
Amy Traverso and Scott Kirsner**

**Kathleen and Victor Parrette**, in memory of Malorie Anne Parrette

**Emily and John Corpos**, in honor of Joan Stone, Leslie Muennemann, Jill Nelson, Joe Twicken and Kristie Shulman

**Cheryl and Charles Gagliasso**

**Thomas Corso**, in memory of Nicky

**Suzanne Gallie and Mark Mitchell**, in memory of Kyra Moree Mitchell

**Wanda Lee and Kenneth Allen**, in memory of David Lee Allen who would have had his 18th birthday this year

**Sonia and Charlie Hardtke**, in loving memory of Luke Hardtke

**Dana and John Kilburg**, in memory of Eden Rose Kilburg

**Rebecca and Andrew Logan**

**Michelle Stosiek**, in memory of Johanna Murphy Sutter for her 20th birthday

**Lisa and Andrew Cope**, in memory of Charles Joseph Cope

**Mar and Matt Hershenson  
Colleen and Dwight Balough**

"The risk of love is loss, and the price of loss is grief -  
But the pain of grief  
Is only a shadow  
When compared with the pain  
Of never risking love."

**Hilary Stanton Zunin, co-author with Leonard M. Zunin of**  
The Art of Condolence  
*What to Write, What to Say, What to Do at a Time of Loss*