



# Helping Hands

Summer 2005

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## Feelings of Fathers

By Chris Friedeck

Men often don't do feelings well. We do everything else, but not that feeling stuff. Women want to feel close, connected. Men need to feel independent, strong. Give me something to fix and I will. Give me a job and I'll get it done, eventually.

When our first baby began to miscarry, I asked my wife Sue what I could do. She said that I couldn't do anything and I felt so helpless because I couldn't make it better. I did what I could for her afterwards. I tried to reassure her, but it was hard to watch her cry and be so sad. I held her but it helped me feel better to wash the car.

We had lost our baby, our dreams and our trust; I grieved but not like Sue. I was sad and cried, but not like her and often not with her. I told her what she needed to do to be better, but she did not listen to me. When

we were short-tempered with each other, I reminded both of us that things would not be smooth because our baby had died and at the time, life was not good.

When we learned that our second child, our son Michael, had a diaphragmatic hernia and did not have a good chance of

surviving, I was overwhelmed.

We had "paid our dues" when we lost our first baby, why was this happening to us? We decided to go to San Francisco to have prenatal

surgery to correct the defect.

During that time, I stayed with Sue in her hospital room, slept on benches and chairs and did what I could while she was bed-ridden. I helped her with bed pans and intercepted hospital staff at night when she was sleeping. I asked for more experienced staff after it took one new blood drawer four times to get a blood sample.

**Fathers** continued on page 3

*...it was hard to watch her cry and be so sad. I held her but it helped me feel better to wash the car.*

# HAND of the Peninsula searching for new home

On June 1, HAND of the Peninsula, along with Sequoia Health and Wellness Services, moved out of their home at 702 Marshall St. in Redwood City.

HAND volunteers Joe Twicken, Jill Nelson, Catherine, Gary and Eric Hoff, Leslie Muenne-  
mann, Melisse Lusin and Christine Reeve rolled up their sleeves and packed, lugged and unloaded HAND's substantial library collection and a few pieces of furniture into a rented storage unit.

Grief, subsequent pregnancy and board meet-  
ings will continue on the scheduled dates but week to week the locations may vary. So please make sure you call (650) 367-6993 or check our website <http://www.handsupport.org> before you attend a meeting.

A heartfelt thank you to Sequoia Health and Wellness Services, and especially its manager, Marie Violet, who for many years generously donated a safe and comfortable place where grieving parents could find caring support.

## 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  
<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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## Fathers

*continued from page 1*

When Michael was born early, I was there and watched the doctors perform a C- section. I kept asking Sue, "Don't you feel that?"

I spent my time by going back and forth between Michael and Sue in the hospital. I was able to lift him and hold him briefly while his bedding was changed. I washed and combed his hair. It was a special time. I believed with all of my heart that Michael would live and we could endure anything because of that.

Hundreds of people across the country were praying for us; I counted on their prayers. But Michael died 13 days after he was born. We brought his body back to bury but not his soul.

Sue and I grieved for Michael very differently. I had to do something. I played more with our dogs. They didn't seem to mind that I cried in their fur. The cars were clean, the basement straight, little jobs, big jobs, it did not matter. By being absorbed in something, anything, I felt some relief from my devastation at the loss of our son.

Sue never seemed to be able to do that. It was hard for her to do anything. She didn't take any of my many suggestions! I could talk about what had happened but it was hard to verbalize my feelings.

When we went to grief support meetings, Sue couldn't and wouldn't talk; I had to. But that was good because I had to talk about what we went through. I didn't want to go to the meetings but she did, so we went.

Many times, at home, there was nothing I could say and the silence screamed at us. But I needed that silence; she needed to talk. I seemed to move forward with my grief and Sue didn't (like I thought she should). She was a mess.

I saw it as my job to hold things together so that she could see that it could be done.

***Many times at home, there was nothing I could say and the silence screamed at us. But I needed that silence; she needed to talk.***

I put my grief away until I thought I could handle it better and she was better. But when I relapsed, she seemed to be more at peace. Two steps forward, three steps back . . . But we held on to our love for each other and for our children and made it through. We even made it through the loss of our third child when she miscarried.

Since doing something seems to be a part of me, I try to do something for Sue on Mother's Day. I give her a card and sign it from our kids.

I give her flowers or some thing that reminds her of our babies. I try to watch for something she really wants but may hesitate to get.

One time she saw a ring that had three garnet stones, one for each of our children. Garnet is Michael's birthstone. When she couldn't put the ring down, I knew I had to get it for her because it meant so much to her. It was not what I would have chosen, but it was what she wanted.

Sometimes, when I did not know what to do help her get through Mother's Day, I didn't do anything. That wasn't such a good idea. Doing something, if only giving her a single flower and wishing her a Happy Mother's Day, is much better.

It probably would be better if Father's Day came before Mother's Day. Then we could know what women expect by what they do for us.

As for Father's Day, I didn't really want to go to church (it was just too hard) but I didn't know what I wanted to do. It is like any other day without my children but I know I'll find something to do when it comes. And I'll be thinking about our babies.

*This article appeared in the May/June, 2001 (Volume 10/Issue 3) edition of Sharing, the bereaved parent newsletter of The National SHARE Office.*

## 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: Melisse Lusin (650) 367-6993

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

**Dates:** June 1 and 15  
July 6 and 20  
Aug. 3 and 17  
Sept. 7 and 21

**Location:** Call as location may vary each meeting

### 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 15  
July 20  
Aug. 17  
Sept. 21

**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 support meetings on the second Wednesday 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:** June 8  
July 13  
Aug. 10  
Sept. 14

### HAND of Santa Cruz

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

**Charles Henry Parker Stanton** — September 30, 2004, to Chip and Jessa Stanton  
**Caitlin Elizabeth and Rorie Madeline Stone** — May 26, 2005, to Doug and Joan Stone

## 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.

### Santa Cruz Mothers of Twins Club

**Diana and Howard Bujtor**  
**Margo and Andrew Meiman**  
**Joanne and Michael Regalia**

**Melissa and Brett Smith**, in memory of an angel in our lives  
**Twila and Paul Forbes**

**Todd Lund**  
Microsoft Giving Campaign matching gift donation of Todd Lund.

**Esther and Saul Twicken**, in memory of our granddaughter, Talia Elise Nelson Twicken

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

**Robin and David Costa**, in memory of Alec Robert Costa's 7th birthday, April 12, 1998

Oracle Matching Gifts Program matching gift donation of **Jill Nelson**

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

**Gigi and Joe Casey**, in memory of Timothy Hoang Casey's 2nd birthday

**Wai Yan Lam**, in memory of Laetitia Mei Bossuwe's 1st birthday

**Silvia Zerbato**, in memory of Baby Stevie David Garcia, on his 6th anniversary

**Melisse Lusin and Brian Holtz** in memory of Blake Charles Holtz

**Jill Nelson and Joseph Twicken**, in honor of The Human Race 2005

**Irene Lustgarten**, in honor of The Human Race 2005

# Did My Baby Suffer?

It is very important that all those touched by a SIDS death understand that SIDS has no specific symptoms, that SIDS occurs in the best of families and to the most capable, careful and loving parents.

Even if the baby had recently shown symptoms of a cold and had been taken to a doctor, there were no signs leading anyone to suspect that the baby would die. No one can tell ahead of time whether a baby will die of SIDS; and no one can stop SIDS from happening.

Because SIDS occurs unexpectedly and usually at home, nearly every parent feels in some way responsible for the baby's death until the facts are explained. Often one parent blames the other, or relatives blame one or both of the parents. Families sometimes blame a childcare provider or the doctor who told them the baby was healthy a short time before the death.

Even after receiving accurate information about SIDS, some family members find it difficult to accept these facts. They may continue to search for answers or to blame themselves or others.

Articles and reports about SIDS often appear in the news media. Periodically such reports imply that "the

cause" has been discovered. It is important to restate that SIDS continues to be an unsolved problem. Even with current scientific knowledge, SIDS victims cannot be identified beforehand.

SIDS is considered to be an almost instantaneous event. There may be some movement during the last few seconds of life, accounting for the unusual positions in which some babies are found.

***No one can tell ahead of time whether a baby will die of SIDS; and no one can stop SIDS from happening.***

Babies do not cry out and often show no sign of having been disturbed in their sleep. Par-

ents who have witnessed their baby's death have reported that they appeared to die very peacefully in their sleep, that they appeared simply to stop breathing.

The reality of a SIDS death, however, is that they did not just stop breathing - their entire body shuts down in an instant, making it impossible to revive these babies even if immediate intervention is made. While scary and hard to understand, this can be of some comfort to those that struggle with feelings of guilt for not being there when their baby died.

*From First Candle/SIDS Alliance, a national nonprofit health organization uniting parents, caregivers and researchers.  
<http://www.sidsalliance.org>*

## Donations

*continued from page 4*

### The Human Race 2005

Donations in memory of Natalie Marie Guidi:

Carol and Matthew Cory  
Renee and Dennis Capovilla  
Marilynn and Jim Ahern  
Beverly and Donald Olaver  
Elizabeth Hoffman and Maurice Druzin

Jeff Schneiderman  
Deirdre Lyell and Max Schireson  
Marlene and Anthony Panacci  
Kimberlee Sorem and Collin Smikle

Julie Postma  
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Perlita Radovan  
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Elizabeth Mc Dougall

Anne Graham  
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Elizabeth Kogut  
Jacqueline and David Laskey

Lorraine and Lilio Guidi  
Elizabeth Rossner

Gina and Daniel Guidi  
Thelma Rogers  
William Wong  
Ronald Guidi  
Pauline and Charles Baker  
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