



# Expressions

Gary's Place For Kids

A nurturing place for the grieving children of Orange County

## Executive Director News - GPFK in 2008

BY MADELINE TUCCI TANNEHILL  
CO-FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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In 2008 Gary's Place For Kids (GPFK) has experienced a re-birth, notwithstanding the approximate 200 families we have served now in the fifth year of our program, with a new nonprofit public benefit corporation, application for our 501(c)(3) status, new board of directors (Mike Aguilar, Debbi Dickinson, Andy Smith, Adele Canzano Denton and myself), a new program director and most importantly a new location. Patricia Zielinski, MFT, is our program director who started with GPFK as one of our first teen facilitators when our doors opened to the public on September 8, 2003. Patricia received her license as a marriage, family therapist in 2006, has written and published a children's book on grieving and in these first few months as GPFK's program director Patricia has recruited four new facilitators. GPFK is thrilled to have Patricia as our program director. She works closely with our program manager/grief program developer, Adele Canzano Denton.

Our professional liaison, Kathleen Braun, staff chaplain at Mission Hospital, was instrumental in securing our new home at the Mission Conference Center, at 26726 Crown Valley Pkwy, Mission Viejo, CA 92692. We are so thankful to the Sisters of St. Joseph and Mission Hospital for providing a safe place to nurture Orange County's grieving children and their families in their grief processing. Our support groups for children, ages three to eighteen, and an adult group, convene from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. every first and third Monday until June 16, 2008. Thereafter we will be on summer break until September 8, 2008. We utilize dynamics of written materials, topical discussion and arts/crafts for our children as our processing tools in our support groups.

Los Alisos Intermediate School conducted our first fund-raiser of the year; **pennies from heaven**, in having its students collect pennies and other coin for one week (February 28th to March 6th) for GPFK. The children at Los Alisos Intermediate School raised \$1,027.90 for GPFK. This is the fourth year that Los Alisos Intermediate School held its pennies from heaven fund-raiser to benefit GPFK with its principal, Dr. Jerry Ray, committed to have children help other children, specifically grieving children. We are so thankful for this commitment from Dr. Ray. As he is committed to helping GPFK we look to your commitment to help GPFK with whatever donation you are able to make at this time in the envelope we have provided. Blessings to you and yours for your support of GPFK!

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Hello to our Gary's Place For Kids families and welcome to our first newsletter! As a Board member of our new non-profit, I am very humbled and honored that Madeline, Adele, and all of the facilitators have asked me to participate in this wonderful grief-support group that is "Gary's Place For Kids." My daughter Ellie and I became a part of Gary's Place after the untimely death of my wife Sandy, nearly a year ago this coming April. While reeling from the death of my wife, Andy Smith (who has also joined our Board of Directors) mentioned Gary's Place to me and of the organization's compassion and support for him and his grieving son and family. Ellie and I were at our first meeting just 2 weeks after her mom's passing and not only was I struggling with my own sense of loss but my daughter was obviously suffering as well and I am sure all of you have noticed, there isn't a lot of support out there for the kids. This is where we hope that GPFK will fill that void for your children. The other wonderful thing about GPFK is that there is a concurrent meeting for the adults that I have found to be an exceptional refuge for my grief thanks to Lynn and Laura our wonderful adult group facilitators. As we all journey along this path we would much rather not have to walk, just know that all of us here at GPFK know that you will find a safe and compassionate place here in which to heal and learn to live with our loss because we all know that it doesn't go away; we just have to learn how to live and cope with it. God Bless you all!

BY MIKEAGUILAR  
GPFK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## About our Founder

Madelin Tucci Tannehill's husband, Gary, died without warning on February 5, 2002, leaving her widowed at age 46 with two daughters, then 10 (Emma) and 12 (Sondra). While Madeline was able to find ongoing grief support for herself in Orange County, none was available for her daughters. Madeline's daughter, Sondra, stated "Mom, I need a continual support group like the one you go to Thursday nights," and from that expressed need came Madeline's passion to create **Gary's Place For kids** for her daughters and all the grieving children of Orange County.

**Thank you Spinn Print for your printing services.**

Newsletter design & production - Debbi Dickinson

Photographs courtesy of Adele Canzano Denton

Gary's Place For Kids is looking for caring people to train to become volunteer facilitators. No degree is required only a 10 month commitment and experience with grief or have compassion for those who are grieving.

If you are interested, please contact Adele at 949-348-0548.

## From our Program Director...



Five years ago, I sat in the living room of our founder Madeline Tannehill and shared a vision of what would one day be called, "Gary's Place for Kids." I started as a children's group facilitator and watched Madeline and the many volunteers direct their grief energy towards the creation of something meaningful; a place where children and adults could travel on their grief journey together.

Knowing the power of reading stories to my young children, I set out to find children's books on grief to read with the children in the groups. When I found the selections limited, I was inspired to write a children's book on grief. I didn't know

at the time that this endeavor would stir up personal losses and encourage me to do some of my own unresolved grief work. I continued to volunteer for two years and then took some time to get licensed as a marriage, family therapist and finish my book. It is interesting how things come around full circle. I was asked to come back to Gary's Place for Kids as the Program Director in December.

Despite changes in the meeting location and program over the years, one thing remains the same. Our relationships and connections to others who share our unique pain is what allows us to heal. It is a gift to come together with others who, "Just get it" even when no words are spoken. It is a privilege to be a part of this program and I am grateful for everyone who shows up week after week. Together we are able to walk through our personal pain, and in turn are inspired to extend our hands out to others and invite them to do the same.

Peace,  
Patricia Zielinski, MFT  
Program Director

## Full Circle

BY LAURA KANE  
GRIEF FACILITATOR

When I first heard about GPFK, my first thought was, "Wow, if only that had been around when I was a kid." My mom died of cancer when I was 10-years old, and my dad died of a heart attack 2 years later. A year after my dad died, on top of losing both parents, my 2-year old dog and best friend was hit by a truck and killed on Nantucket Island - - of all places! Nantucket is not known for its traffic, not to mention trucks.



GPFK made complete and total sense to me. The only thing sad to me was the "why" it started. Madeline lost her husband, Gary; and her 2 young daughters, Sondra and Emma, lost their dad. I knew the family through my church, St. Kilian's Catholic Church. I was about Sondra's age when my dad died, and Emma's age when my mom died. Madeline had her grief support group, and there was no such grief support group for her girls.

There was no way I could not become a facilitator with GPFK. Since I was over-committed with so many other things, I did not train as a facilitator at GPFK's inception. Looking back, I believe my "over-commitment" may have been the perfect reason to keep my distance - - I don't think I was ready. I feared that I still had a lot of grieving of my own to do. I knew some day I would become a facilitator, however, in the beginning, all I was able to do was support it as much as I could financially.

# GPFK's... putting back the smiles of grieving kids



"Thank you so much for your hospitality last night. I am very glad we found Gary's Place. Simon loved it, he said he wants to come back...."

...What I liked the most was that Simon came out talking very freely about his mom, and his feelings."



"I've got to say that I KNOW for a fact that Gary's Place For Kids is the reason that Jenae has been able to process and deal with her grief which gives her a positive outlet for her feelings. She is a very healthy, happy 9 year old because of Gary's Place For Kids. When her father passed away, Jenae went through a lot of inner turmoil and was acting out in very inappropriate ways before I brought her to Gary's Place. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you and say God Bless You and the staff at Gary's Place for all you do for the children!!"

Happy New Year to you and yours!  
Sincerely, Lauren Scricca



## Mission Statement

Gary's Place For kids provides ongoing grief support for Orange County children, ages 3 to 18, who have experienced the loss of a loved one due to a death, enabling them to process their grief feelings, reach grief adjustment and lead productive lives.

## Expressions

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### Board of Directors

Madeline Tucci Tannehil  
Adele Canzano Denton  
Debbi Dickinson  
Mike Aguilar  
Andy Smith

### Professional Liaison

Kathleen Braun (staff chaplain at Mission Hospital)

### Mission Hospital Representative for GPFK

Mary Hackman

### Program Director

Patricia Zielinski, MFT

### Facilitators

Donna Blaser  
Cory Bocker  
Lynn Doyle  
Laura Kane  
Kathryn Mayfield  
Sondra Tannehill (co-founder of GPFK)  
Herlinda Bradley-Urquidez  
Julie Wells  
Candi Wuhrman

## New location for GPFK's meetings

Mission Conference Center  
26726 Crown Valley Pkwy.  
Mission Viejo, CA 92692

Thank you to the  
Sisters of St. Joseph &  
Mission Hospital

- When I (finally!) decided to become a facilitator, I had done some grief work. I found a book called "Motherless Daughters The Legacy of Loss" by Hope Edelman. Not only did I learn that I was not alone in my grief journey, my feelings were also shared with so many women who also lost their mothers. It was eye opening for me.
- I also thought about talking to a licensed professional because I was becoming more and more overwhelmed with the mere thought of turning 40-years old. And not for the same reasons as most women. Being as happy, fulfilled and grateful as I was in my late 30s, I felt tremendously sad at the same time. My mom never turned 40-years old - she died when she was only 39.
- Incorporating GPFK into my life and becoming a facilitator is one of the best decisions I ever made. It's the extra-curricular activity closest to my heart. I have worked primarily with the adult group. If I was asked to summarize in one or two sentences how GPFK has impacted me, I would say, "Participating with GPFK has been as healing for me as it has been rewarding. Every week I am honored and humbled to share in the tremendous strength and courage from the adult group as all of them work their way through their individual journeys.
- I would love to see and perhaps be a part of GPFK expanding not only statewide but also nationwide. Resources for children's grief support are tremendously lacking. Is it possible, is it because the general public does not want to talk about death? Perhaps. However, by not talking about what is ultimately inevitable for each and every one of us, I think we are doing a tremendous disservice to children and teens. My sincere hope is that GPFK is the launching pad for the creation and development of other resources addressing children's grief it certainly is needed.
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Grieving Children of Orange County

TO: