



## A TIME TO CELEBRATE; A TIME TO GRIEVE

There are many times in the course of one's grief journey that the "wound" of grief is aggravated. This is especially true during the holidays and special occasions encountered for the first time after a loss. Here are some practical things to consider during this time in your grief journey:

- **PLANNING** – It is not necessary to plan an elaborate gathering to celebrate a special day. In fact, it may be overwhelming to do so. What is most important is that the day does not go by without acknowledgement. Even if it's planting a flower in your garden in their honor or planning to go sit by the ocean for the day. Having a plan helps us approach the day with less dread, while attempting to avoid the reality of the day often leads to greater intensity of grief pain.
- **TRADITIONS** – With the loss of a loved one, some traditions are no longer possible in the way we have always known them. Some traditions can stay the same. It is important, especially to families and communities, to creatively integrate the old traditions in

Continued on page 2

## Healing, honoring a loved one through giving

Many times after a person or family has experienced a personal journey of grief or loss and some time has passed, they look to find meaning in the loss.

Giving back can represent a turning point, filling the void of loss and honoring the memory of a loved one.

According to Optimal Bereavement Counselor Connie Pulmano M.A., a key to finding meaning after a loss is discovering hope in the meaning in the life of the person who was lost and using that hope to help others. This isn't always easy, and usually it is more beneficial after some time has passed since the loss, rather than for a near-term loss.

### What is the right time?

Connie believes that for the first month or two after a loss, a person experiences psychological Novocaine. That is, they don't feel the pain and haven't really confronted and worked through the grief yet.

After that period the numbness wears off, and the fullness of their pain is realized. That pain tends to be central and needs to be worked through. During this time, the amount of emotional energy needed to grieve is great.

"Each person must resolve their grief before re-engaging and giving back," said Connie. The right time may be when, after expending energy in grieving, they are trying to search for meaning. They may

ask, What now? How can I give back?

Typically a year is a good benchmark for being ready to give back through volunteering. Contributions of money or other gifts may be able to be made sooner, but any fears or reservations associated with those acts must be addressed.

Connie said, "In my counseling, I see people who fear stepping out again, and this prevents them from doing other meaningful things in their lives. But, on the other side of fear, there is meaning, and hope." Her goal is to guide them toward that hope.

### How to Give Back

To choose how to give back, one might look at what is important to them or the things they used to enjoy.

Donating goods or services are one way of honoring a memory, as are contributions of money. Participation in community events like the National Day of Caring could be another way to give back. Organizing a drive for a cause that

Continued on page 2



## A TIME,

continued from page 1

new ways, as well as be free to try new traditions. Just as anything new, the first time will likely feel awkward. However, remembering that you are setting the foundation for future years can give you the freedom to be creative with celebrating in new ways.

- **RITUAL** – Rituals are as ancient as humankind. They help us celebrate, remember, commemorate and worship. Rituals can be as simple as lighting a candle or attending a memorial service. A ritual can be religious, or not. All that matters is that your ritual is meaningful to you, and makes you feel close to the essence of your loved one.
- **MEANING** – Foundational to a successful and healthy grief journey is meaning. When we lose someone, there is an “empty space” or void left behind. Meaning is the essence of your loved one that begins to fill that once-empty space. Giving to a charity is one way to make meaning of your loved one's life in ways that are far-reaching, and lasting. Knowing that your memorial gift is making a difference in the lives of many can once again bring joy and comfort.

Giving ourselves permission to be different after a loss is paramount to the freedom to grieve well. Even though the holidays are often a painful reminder, it is possible to create this free space to celebrate with tears and love through pain.

by *Connie Pulmano, M.A.*  
Bereavement Counselor  
Optimal Hospice Care

**Giving Tuesday is  
December 2, 2014**

Please consider giving  
to Optimal Hospice  
Foundation.



## Giving, continued from page 1

the loved one cared about can give meaning as well, and dedicating an object to their memory, like a bench near their favorite park, might be another way to honor a loved one.

While those who can't give large donations of time or money might be discouraged, doubting their impact, Optimal Hospice Group Facilitator Cindy Stone reminds us that, “Giving takes many different shapes and forms. Every little bit helps, be it money or donations, but a smile or a handshake or a willing ear can be impactful as well.”

Cindy said, “In my interactions with kids dealing with loss, it is remarkable to watch the kids support each other; that is their way of giving back, even if they don't recognize it as such. There is never an act too small or insignificant; it will always make an impact. I see that it is very healing to give back on any level.”

Volunteering may be a rewarding way to give back and a way to find that meaning for



“Optimal Hospice was so good to me and my husband while he was under hospice care. The nurses and other staff members helped me so much and were so kind. I give back to Optimal because of what they did for us and to honor his memory. I know through Carepals I bring a little joy and peace. I really enjoy it!”

Gaye Siemon and Bonnie  
Carepals Volunteers  
since June 2010

which they are searching. Connie said, “As it relates to Hospice, many times the comforting service the person or family received brings them back to Hospice as a volunteer. Our great service can provide a path for those who are ready to give back.”

Please contact the Optimal Hospice Foundation office near you to learn more about opportunities to give back.

## Thank you Kids Camp 2014 sponsors and donors



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Stay up to date, make donations and get more information at  
[OptimalHospiceFoundation.com](http://OptimalHospiceFoundation.com), and follow us on Facebook too!

# Light Up A Life



## Save the date for our 2014 Light Up A Life Community Celebrations

Optimal Hospice Foundation is pleased to announce the schedule of Light Up A Life Community Celebrations for 2014.

These Celebrations bring together communities to remember loved ones in a joyous celebration filled with inspirational music, personal reflections, candle lighting, ceremonial reading of names and the lighting of our Tree of Life adorned with lights in memory of loved ones and friends.

“The Celebrations are free to attend and open to everyone, not just those touched by hospice care,” said Foundation Director Cherie Shoemake.

“For a minimum \$10 donation an ornament with a loved one’s name will be placed on our Tree of Life, and if received prior to the event date, their name will be read during the Celebration.”

Information will be mailed the first week of November and also can be found on our website:  
[OptimalHospiceFoundation.com](http://OptimalHospiceFoundation.com)



Please join in one of our uplifting community celebrations to honor and remember loved ones and friends who have been a special part of our lives.

### **BAKERSFIELD**

Wednesday, December 3  
6:30 p.m.  
Kern County Museum\*  
3801 Chester Avenue

### **BAY AREA**

Saturday, November 22  
2:30 p.m.  
Centers for Spiritual Living  
1195 Clark Street, San Jose

### **FRESNO**

Thursday, December 4  
6:00 p.m.  
Fig Garden Village\*  
Palm & Shaw Avenue

### **KERN RIVER VALLEY**

Saturday, December 6  
11:00 a.m.  
Lodge at Painted Rock  
2908 Pearl Harbor Drive  
Keyesville (Lake Isabella)

### **LONG BEACH**

Thursday, December 4  
6:00 p.m.  
Vintage Cerritos Senior Living\*  
11600 New Falcon Way  
Cerritos

### **MODESTO**

Tuesday, December 9  
6:00 p.m.  
Bethel Retirement\*  
2345 Scenic Drive

### **PORTERVILLE**

Wednesday, December 3  
6:00 p.m.  
Roger S. Good Cancer Center\*  
456 West Putnam Avenue

### **STOCKTON**

Wednesday, December 10  
6:00 p.m.  
Dell’Osso Family Farms\*  
501 South Manthey Road  
Lathrop

### **TAFT**

Thursday, December 11  
6:00 p.m.  
The Historic Fort\*  
915 North 10th Street

### **TEHACHAPI**

Sunday, December 7  
4:30 p.m.  
Kelcy’s  
110 West Tehachapi Blvd.

### **VISALIA AND TULARE**

Tuesday, December 2  
6:00 p.m.  
Café 210\*  
210 Center Avenue  
Visalia

\*Outdoor/partially outdoor event

# Thank You for Your Support

The following individuals and organizations generously contributed to Optimal Hospice Foundation from January through July 2014. On behalf of the patients and families we serve, thank you for your support.

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### Foundation Office

1315 Boughton Drive  
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(661) 716-8000

### Community Offices

#### Bakersfield

1675 Chester Avenue, #401  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
(661) 716-8000

#### Kern River Valley

6504 Lake Isabella Blvd, #E  
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(408) 207-9220

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3200 East 19th Street  
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2439 West Whitendale Avenue, #B  
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## Support groups available through Optimal Hospice Care

These groups are open to the public and offered free of charge.

### Bakersfield

Tuesdays  
10–11:30 a.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
4600 Stockdale Hwy., Room 4

Thursdays  
6–7:30 p.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
4600 Stockdale Hwy., Room 4

**Kid's Grief Connection**  
Call (661) 371-2102 for info.

### Fresno

Mondays  
6–7:30 p.m.  
Sunrise of Fresno  
7444 N. Cedar Ave.

**Families Affected by Alzheimer's**  
Saturday mornings  
Sommerford Place, 6075 N. Marks Ave.  
Call (559) 320-4000 for info.

### Lake Isabella

Wednesdays  
2:30–4 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care Office  
6504 Lake Isabella Blvd., Ste. E

### Madera

Wednesdays  
Cedar Creek Senior Living  
Center  
500 N. Westbury Blvd.  
Call (559) 320-4000 for info.

### Modesto

Last Thursday  
4–5:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care  
1101 Sylvan Ave., Ste. B-10

**Kid's Grief Connection**  
Call (209) 338-3000 for info.

### Porterville

2nd & 4th Thursday  
10:30 a.m.–Noon  
Sierra Hills Retirement Center  
2500 West Henderson

### Santa Clara

Optimal Hospice Care  
3372 Scott Blvd., Ste. 410  
Call for info: (408) 207-9222

### Stockton

Last Friday  
4–5:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care  
3461 Brookside Road, Ste. A2

### Taft

Thursdays  
1–2:30 p.m.  
Chevron Valley Credit Union  
1092 W. Kern St.  
Community Room., outside  
entrance

**Kid's Grief Connection**  
Call (661) 371-2102 for info.

### Tehachapi

Tuesdays  
1:30–3 p.m.  
Tehachapi Senior Citizens Center  
500 East F St.

### Visalia

2nd & 4th Tuesday  
3–4:30 p.m.  
Optimal Hospice Care Office  
2439 W. Whitendale Ave., Ste. B