



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



TCF of Potomac, MD
Newsletter Quarter 4 Fall/Winter 2023

We meet the first Thursday of the month. Meetings begin at 7:00

Potomac Presbyterian Church
10301 River Road
Potomac, MD 20854
www.TCFPotomacMD.com



The Compassionate Friends Mission

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national self-help organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child, grandchild or sibling. TCF members provide information and support. Volunteers run the more than 660 local chapters in the U.S., and TCF has chapters in many other countries.

The Compassionate Friends National

48660 Pontiac Trail
#930808
Wixom, MI 48393
877-969-0019



Leaders Danny Norris
Marilyn Schuman

Co-Leaders Nancy Frank
Rob Goor

Treasurer Marc Smith

Newsletter Marilyn Schuman

Outreach Mitzi Sereno

New Members George & Barbara Beall

Librarian Lilyan Heupel

Web Page Marilyn Schuman

Facilitators Barbara & George Beall

Nancy Frank

Rob Goor

Danny Norris

Steering Committee: all of the above + Daryl Thornton,
Vickie Smith, Katherine Bloom and Mary Mandeville

A Message From the Chapter Leaders



As we begin Quarter 4 by looking back at Quarter 3, we saw a large jump in the number of new people who, unfortunately, needed us, and fortunately found us. We recently became aware of a situation that is confusing to new members, and that involves the word, “new.”

Heard at every meeting:

**“New grievors, please go upstairs.
Seasoned grievors stay here.”**

*So how do you know when you
are ready to stay downstairs?*



It’s clear that we are all “new” when we come to our first meeting. It recently came to our attention that some people thought that, once they had gone upstairs during their first meeting, they were no longer “new,” and they needed to stay downstairs.

Let’s clarify: here are a few helpful things to know during your first few months:

1. Most new grievors go with the group upstairs between, roughly, 3 – 5 months; some more.
2. The upstairs group is typically a smaller group where everyone is still experiencing fresh grief, which is newer and more painful than where most of the more seasoned grievors downstairs are. (Danny and I went upstairs for about 4 or 5 months before we felt comfortable enough to stay downstairs with the others.)
3. The other helpful thing to know is that the group downstairs has a specific topic they all come prepared to discuss and share.
4. When new grievors are upstairs, they can talk about *whatever they need to discuss at that time*, and everyone can share whatever is in their heart that night. The discussions upstairs are more free-flowing, and are catered to the individual needs of whoever happens to be talking at the time.

People are welcome upstairs for as long as they feel they need or want to be there – for up to three years.

We hope this helps clarify the issue. Any questions?

Feel free to ask any of the veteran members.

Danny & Marilyn

We apologize* for leaving the Announcement Page out of our last issue, *especially to Andrea Keller, who leads the Sibling Group, George and Barbara Beall, who lead the new members, and Lilyan Heupel, who brings the library books every month. The information about their contributions is important.

Also, it is our goal to send the newsletter out in the middle of the quarter, but we are publishing it early this time, because it is important to inform everyone about the upcoming Candle Lighting special event coming early in December.

Angel*versaries

* * * * *

Our Children Remembered



October

Paula Alarid	Micah
David & Aurea Ferraz	Joao David Ferraz
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel	Gerald Francis Heupel III
Sandra Ort	William Villavicecio



November

Rosary & Joe Bovello	Sean Michael Vecchiarelli
Nilda & Gary Colgrove	Jesse Colgrove
Dina Lacayo	Lisaicy Lacayo
Donna Tanner	John w. Hanner
JoAnn Gellman	Julia Gelman
Danny Norris & Marilyn Schuman	Kimberly
Mary & Andre Polissedjian	Jessica Lynn Polissedjian
Alexandria Pratt (sister)	Josh
Joan M. Rice	Dina Lynn Rice Battle
Marlene Scofield	Brian

December

Bonnie & Paul Beck	Jordan Beck
Rachel & Seth Berenzweig	Joshua David Berenzweig
Katherine Bloom	Maurice Schiffer (brother)
Marci & Rich Leotta	Noah Leotta
Ella Marshall-Cook & Andy Marshall	Andrew Marshall-Cook
Ana Medrano & jeff Gray	Chris Medrano
Quiming & Grancise Michon	Cecile Michon
Mary & German Nader	Carrolyn C. Nader
Jennifer & John O'Neal	Julian
Brian Sansoni	Vivian Sansoni
Marison & Fausto Vela	Daniel



NOTE FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR: If any of the information above is not accurate or the way you want it displayed, (or, worse, totally missing your child), please let me know at [Note2Mar@yahoo.com](mailto>Note2Mar@yahoo.com). And, please put TCF in the message title. Thank you. Marilyn Schuman



TCF POTOMAC CHAPTER CANDLE LIGHTING EVENT

Thursday, December 7, 2023



For those who are new to TCF this year, chapters and members all across the country and around the world celebrate a very special Candle Lighting event every December. Ours will be during our regular December meeting time, at the church where we always meet, but the event will not be anything like our regular meetings. We will start by gathering in the chapel,* where we will share greetings and a few short traditions that are a part of our annual event. We have invited Sandra and Stephanie Chaiken to be our guests of honor: Sandra and her late husband, Lionel, founded our chapter after they lost their daughter, Pamela Sue, to brain cancer, and Stephanie is her surviving daughter. We will have a guest speaker, Barbara Hopkinson, who will share a short, but fascinating presentation about resilience.

We meet in the chapel because it lends itself to allowing an audience to easily see and hear the speaker, and it has audio-visual capabilities so we can see the engaging slide show she will share as she talks about how her resilience helped her rise above the many challenges she has faced in her life.

At the end of the presentation, we will form a circle around the chapel and light our candles. Our children's names are called, one by one, and that is when we have a moment to light our child (or children's) candles and say a few words to them.

After the Official TCF Candle Lighting is over, we will move into the Social Hall for light refreshments and fellowship. There will be chairs around the room so people can sit if they want.

IF YOU PLAN TO JOIN US, PLEASE PRINT OUT THE REGISTRATION FORM ON THE NEXT PAGE AND SEND IT WITH A CHECK.

*The Compassionate Friends does not endorse any religion over any other.

WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING MEMORIAL SERVICE



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 10th, 2023 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL), a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.


The Compassionate Friends Potomac Chapter
Reservation for the 23rd Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony

You are cordially invited to attend the 23rd Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony of the Potomac Chapter of the Compassionate Friends to honor and remember our children, grandchildren and siblings.

Our ceremony will be held on
Thursday, December 7, 2023 at 7:00 pm
At the Potomac Presbyterian Church
10301 River Road, Potomac, MD 20854

Our evening will begin with a warm welcome followed by our guest speaker, Barbara Hutchinson. After her presentation we will have our ceremony, one-by-one, individually lighting candles for each of our children, grandchildren and siblings, and saying a few words to them. After the program, we will gather in the social hall to share friendship, and a reception of light snacks and desserts, as well as TCF friendship and togetherness.

The Candle Lighting Ceremony is for your immediate family members or a close supportive friend. We are asking for a \$10.00 per person donation to defray the costs of the event for each family member attending, age 12 and above.

PLEASE RSVP by November 27, 2023 by copying this page, completing the bottom portion of this form and mailing it with your **check payable to TCF – Potomac Chapter** to our treasurer – **OR** – bring this form and a check to a meeting. 

Marc Smith
4241 Sandcastle Lane
Olney, Maryland 20832

Please Print Legibly

Name(s): _____

Name of your
child / grandchild / sibling _____

Total number of family members who will attend: _____

You may also like to enclose a **Love Gift “In Memory Of _____”**

Name of Donor: _____ (relationship): _____

Announcements



Our December meeting will be our December 7th Candle Lighting

Our January meeting will be Thursday, the 4th, 2024

Our February meeting will be Thursday, the 1st

We try to get our meetings started on time, so please try to arrive early enough so we may greet you, and you can sign in.

If you are newly bereaved, please contact:
Barbara & George Beall -- 301-253-8740
Oldedish@starpower.net

The Sibling Group

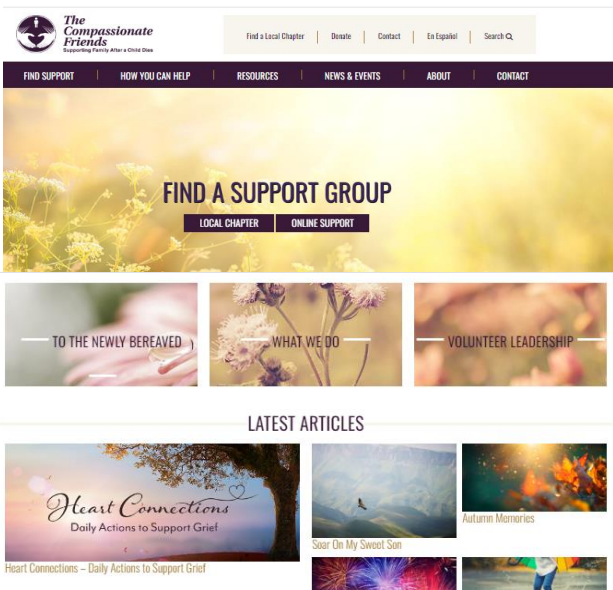
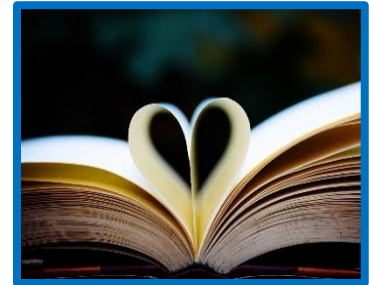
The TCF Adult (18+) sibling group meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00 PM at TGI Fridays in Rockville. The address is: 12147 Rockville Pike, in the Pike Shopping Center (Twinbrook/Rockville area). 301-231-9048

Please join our closed Facebook page
"MD/DC/VA Adult Sibling Loss Support Group"
for further information.

Contact Andrea Keller at andreakeller9@yahoo.com or 301-802-1855

Our Chapter Library

The Potomac Chapter has an extensive library which includes books written by people who have lost a child or sibling. The books are free and available for 3 months at a time to our members. Please look for the book tables, with thanks to Lilyan Heupel, who brings the entire collection (!) every month.



The TCF National Web Page

Please visit this great resource at Compassionatefriends.org.

Apologies for the quality of the screenshot, but please consider visiting the site.



Compassionate Friends Help the Living Live



It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside-down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word *PATIENCE*Patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt, with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly. PATIENCE!!

Rose Moen

TCF, Carmel – Indianapolis, IN

To some, it may seem that participation in The Compassionate Friends is dwelling on death. It isn't! Compassionate Friends is a positive experience that says you recognize that death is a part of life and as such, must be given the necessary attention.

Death comes to everyone at some time in their lives. Even after someone close to us dies we must go on living or die, too. Compassionate Friends wants to help you go on living. We want to help you bridge the gap that death has made in your living.

When there is death life ends for that person. And for a while, lives of those left behind seem to end, also. Our society still often isolates the dying person and Unfortunately, it also isolates the bereaved person.

We want to provide a place for the bereaved.

A place to heal, to grow and to “become” again.

A place to learn about grief and its repercussions.

A place to be accepted and understood.

A place for the living to live again to take control of lives That seem to be out of control during bereavement.

Compassionate Friends will be there when you need them For as long as you need them.

We take the words, “compassionate” and “friends” seriously.

Fay Harden, TCF of Tuscaloosa, AL

Writing from some of our Compassionate Friends



The Compassionate Friends is an international, non-profit, peer support organization offering friendship, understanding, grief education and HOPE for the future to all families who are grieving the death of a child at any age from any cause including miscarriage, stillbirth, infant and adult.

We are not counsellors or therapists. We are people who have journeyed (in varying degrees) the same road you are now travelling.

Grieving the death of a child is the most agonizing condition of life. The pain of bringing them into the world is barely a whisper compared to the labor of “letting them go.” Making the necessary adjustments seems next to impossible, and in some ways we probably never adjust completely. But time, once again, plays the master here --- there will come a gradual diminishing of the pain or, at the very least we learn more creative ways of coping with our own grief in any given situation.

Dana Gensler – TCF of Rockfield KY

Love Gifts & A New Opportunity!

The Compassionate Friends is a self-supporting, non-profit organization solely dependent on Love Gifts and other donations for operating expenses of all TCF Chapters.

If you would like to send a LOVE GIFT in memory of your child or another loved one, or in honor of any occasion, it will be greatly appreciated.

LOVE GIFTS are fully tax deductible. There is a basket at monthly meetings with LOVE GIFT envelopes. All donations must be in check form.

You may also mail **LOVE GIFTS** to:

Marc Smith
4241 Sandcastle Lane
Olney, MD 20832



Love Gifts
A thoughtful way
to remember our precious children

SO . . . What is the "New Opportunity?"

Instead of simply sharing the list below, with just the parents' and the children's names, going forward, we invite you to dedicate your love gift to your child, or any loved one with a simple brief message. A dedication is strictly voluntary. A few examples below:

Carol & George F., "In memory of John & Colby F."

Randall & Charlotte O., "In Memory of Keith O. 7/3/73 – 11/2/2001"

Elizabeth C., "To my Beloved son, Billy Joe C. I walk the road where I live now and think of you above me in the sky. I do talk to you often."

Love Gift Donations – Quarter 3 - 2023



From:	In Loving Memory of:
Donna Tanner	John Hanner
Virginia Bourgeois	Jerome Bourgeois
Marlene Scofield	Brian Scofield
Danny & Marilyn Norris	Kimberly Norris

Why are Love Gift donations important? We are solely dependent on donations to cover all our expenses, from paying the church, refreshments for meetings, the speaker for Candle Lighting, our Web page, and all the other expenses needed to keep the chapter running smoothly and comfortably for you.

Police Substation Named After Fallen Montgomery County Officer Noah Leotta

Leotta was struck and killed while working holiday DUI enforcement in December 2015

Published May 21, 2023 • Updated on May 21, 2023 at 9:27 am



Our Potomac Chapter of TCF often feels like family.

For those who don't know, Noah Leotta is the beloved son of Rich and Marcie Leotta. Noah volunteered for drunk driving detail during the holidays in 2015. He pulled a drunk driver over and while he was writing a ticket, another drunk driver speeding by struck and killed Officer Leotta. Montgomery County is honoring him by building a much-needed satellite facility in Olney and naming it after Noah.

Over a dozen members of our chapter showed up at the very special dedication ceremony this past spring, as so many of us have known Rich and Marcie since they lost Noah and found us.

We learned how important it is for the Olney precinct to have their own substation, as officers had to drive quite a distance across the county if they needed to fill out a report or take care of any other important business. We already knew what an extraordinary honor it was for them to name the new facility after Noah.

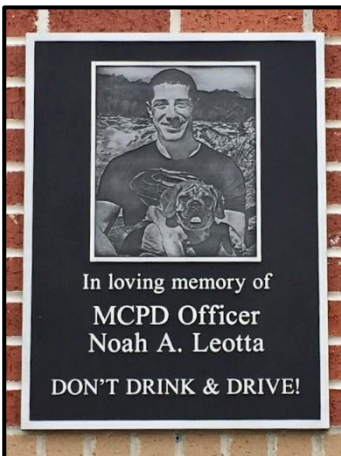
Noah's dad, Rich, has been extremely active in Annapolis for almost 8 years, trying to get a common-sense safety law passed that will make it much harder for drunk drivers to get behind the wheel and drive, for which we are all grateful.

Alas, Danny couldn't get all the faces from the chapter who were there, but here are some of us.



Learn more:

<https://www.officernoahleottafoundation.org/>



Next time you are in Olney, go to Grill Marx for great food, and be sure to look at the wall outside the front door, and see this beautiful plaque.

Grief is like the wake behind a boat. It starts out as a huge wave that follows close behind you and is big enough to swamp and drown you if you suddenly stop moving forward. But if you do keep moving the big wake will eventually dissipate. And after a long time, the waters of your life get calm again and that is when the memories of those who have left begin to shine as bright and as enduring as the stars above.

- Jimmy Buffett

*Some of the most
comforting words
in the universe
are "me too".*

*That moment when you
find out that
your struggle is also
someone else's struggle,
that you're not alone,
and
that others have been
down the same road.*

-Rita Ghatourey

TCF – Winnipeg Chapter

Are You Looking for Additional Support from Those Who Understand?

TCF "Online Support Community" offers
opportunity for Grief Sharing

* * *

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). The program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversations among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as

more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved Less than 3 years," "Bereaved More than 3 year," "Parents, Grandparents and Siblings," "No Surviving Children," and "Suicide." This information was updated 9/28/23. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support in the "Resources" column. *Thanks to the TCF North Oklahoma City Chapter for this information.*

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents, we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times, we wish it would. This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts.

One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness, in effect, becomes a constant yearning to remember our children. Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time, and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name, and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand. For a fleeting second, that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now.

A tiny flickering flame that can warm the heart, and it's nice to think that, perhaps, they can see it, too. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief. We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery, TCF Houston, TX



Some of the most comforting words in the universe are **“me too”**.

That moment when you find out that your struggle is also someone else’s struggle, that **you’re not alone**, and that others have been down the same road.

-Rita Ghatourey

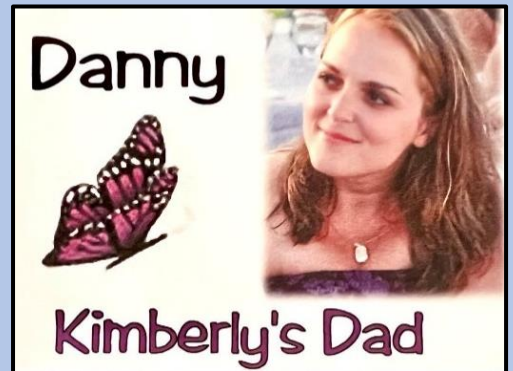
This is my wish for you:
Comfort on difficult days,
Smiles when sadness intrudes,
Rainbows to follow the clouds,
Laughter to kiss your lips,
Sunsets to warm your heart,
Hugs when spirits sag,
Beauty for your eyes to see,
Friendships to brighten your being,
Faith so that you can believe,
Confidence for when you doubt,
Courage to know yourself,
Patience to accept the truth,
Love to complete your life.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

TWO FREE OFFERS! (and you can have both!)



A Pin-on Photo Button
You can wear it anywhere



A Personalized Clip-on Nametag
You can wear it to our meetings

For the Buttons

1. Print out a square photo of your child – **a little larger** than 3”x 3”.
2. Please use plain white printer paper, not photo paper. (The buttons are 3” in diameter, so the photo should be a tiny bit bigger.)
3. Cut the photo out so it has a 1/4 inch white margin on all sides.
4. Bring your 3 ½” x 3 ½” square paper with the photo to a meeting with your name and your child’s name on the back.

For the Clip-on Nametags

Please email the photo in digital form to Note2mar@yahoo.com and please put “Clip-on nametag” in the subject line.

The size of the photo doesn’t matter, as it will be digital.

Please include your name(s), and what you want on the bottom line.

**The TCF
Vision:**

That everyone who needs us
will find us;

And everyone who finds us
will be helped

2017 The Compassionate Friends



This is YOUR chapter newsletter.

You are invited to submit any article, poem or link you think the members of our special group would appreciate. Please provide the name of the poet or author.

If you write for therapy, to help you process your grief, or to allow the memories of your child to flow onto the pages of a story, poem or heartfelt description, please feel free to submit your writings to Marilyn at note2mar@yahoo.com. (Please put “TCF” as part of your subject line. We would love to publish words from your heart, to help us get to know you and your child better.

**OCTOBER, NOVEMBER &
DECEMBER - OUR CHALLENGE:**

The Holidays Without Them



A Letter to My Family and Friends

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season. It will be our first Christmas without our child and I have all I can do coping with the “spirit” of the holiday on the radio, TV, in the news-papers and stores. We do not feel joyous, and trying to pretend this Christmas is going to be like the last one will be impossible because we are missing one.

Please allow me to talk about my child if I feel the need. Don't be uncomfortable with my tears. My heart is breaking, and the tears are a way of letting out my sadness.

I plan to do something special in memory of my child. Please recognize my need to do this in order to keep our memories alive. My fear is not that I'll forget, but that you will.

Please don't criticize me if I do something that you don't think is normal. I'm a different person now and it may take a long time before this different person reaches an acceptance of my child's death. As I survive the stages of grief, I will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the “special” days throughout the year. Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season.

Love, A Bereaved TCF Parent



Halloween, Thanksgiving, Chanukah,
Christmas, the New Year:
Holiday Memories Wash Over Us

This quarter is often the most challenging time of the year for so many. It goes without saying that their birthday and Angel-versary are especially painful, but these three months are flooded with vivid memories of them picking pumpkins, dressed for Halloween, and trick-or-treating; or gathered around the family Thanksgiving table, perhaps decorated with a paper turkey they made. And whatever candles you may light, and whatever holidays you celebrate in December, the memories are vivid and filled with joy that can be painful and difficult to remember.



November Again

Leaves are turning the shades of autumn
Then falling, one by one,
To the misted ground below.
Summer flowers have faded and died. The
sun hides behind dark and dreary clouds.

It is November again.
Was it so long ago
that this month brought warm
thoughts of Thanksgiving together?
The smell of wood burning,
walks in the nippy air?

This is the month you left us.
And all the warm glow of November
went with you.
All that remains are the chrysanthemums
planted in a special memorial garden for you.

Ready to burst into beautiful shades
Of yellow and orange.
They symbolize one more year without you.
But our love has not diminished.
Pat Dodge
TCF Sacramento, CA

