One place that is equipped to help children process grief is Optimal Hospice Foundation’s Kids Camps, now in our 21st year of service.

These camps are both a place to express grief and, surprisingly, to forget about it as well.

Connie Pulmano, M.A., the bereavement counselor for Optimal Hospice – Fresno and Visalia, explained the purpose and scope of the camps. “Part of the reason these camps are important is that children are going to grieve differently depending on their development stage, socioeconomic or cultural background,” she said.

“How can an adult know if a child who has suffered a loss from death needs help in processing their grief?”

The answer is in the question, according to Optimal Hospice Group Facilitator Cindy Stone, M.S.W., GC-C. “The truth is that any child that has experienced the death of a loved one will need some help,” said Cindy. “If there has been a loss, there will be grieving, and they will need someone to help them through that.”

Getting adults to recognize that fact is a challenge, primarily because children grieve in so many different ways, and the adults are dealing with their own grief and often other circumstances that are impacting their lives.

That’s not to say that when a child is seen crying or acting out that adults can’t clue in on that and help.

Children experiencing loss need adult champions

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That’s not to say that when a child is seen crying or acting out that adults can’t clue in on that and help.

“Many times the child doesn’t know the ‘appropriate or acceptable’ way to grieve and thus often doesn’t have the easily identifiable signs that most adults would normally associate with grief,” said Cindy. (For some helpful tips, see the sidebar).

“Our sincere hope is that we can get all adults to be observational and get them to recognize that they are the ones in charge, they are the ones making the day to day decisions, and those decisions often can impact the way a child can process the loss and the resulting grief,” said Cindy.

“As a group facilitator, I work closely with the children, but we need first to impact the adults and start the conversation with them so they can use their position to direct the child to the places that are well equipped for helping children through the trying times following a loss.”

Kids Camps allow time for grief, forgetting

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“We have the camps for those children who have had a hard year due to their loss,”

Continued on page 2
Kids Camps, continued from page 1

Connie continued. “The camp isn’t a ‘grief retreat.’ It is more of a ‘grief break;’ a time for them to have fun and be a kid. Sometimes it is good for them to forget the grief for awhile, since it likely has been in the forefront for some time.”

At the Fresno Camp, for example, the day is scheduled around fun activities, not around processing grief.

“We have integrated the grief counseling into the day by adding activities like an art program,” said Connie. “Perhaps we then talk about the symbolism in what we are painting and allowing an outlet there. At nighttime in the cabins, we do affirmations; the kids write and then read what they have written.”

Even more surprising is what happens when the children have time to talk with their peers. According to Connie, the kids know they have a circumstance in common. Over the few days at camp, the kids bond, and as they get comfortable with each other, they can talk as peers and relate.

If the children want to talk to a counselor, the camps do have trained adults like Connie and Cindy Stone who can help unpack their feelings.

“As a counselor, I am part of the action and just as involved as the rest of the volunteers in the fun. But the kids know who I am since I am introduced as someone they can talk to if they are feeling sad, angry or confused,” said Connie.

Cindy also attends the camps in her role as a group facilitator. She said, “Allowing the children to validate their emotional state is important, so that they understand that grief is normal. Camp time is about honest talk. They don’t need to be worried about upsetting their family members with tough or sensitive questions. We just need to make sure that we can get the children where they need to be to help them cope. That’s really the main goal.”

Thanks to the generosity of camp sponsors and Optimal Hospice Foundation donors, Kids Camp is offered at no charge to families. Sponsorships start as low as $250.

If you would like to sponsor a camp, make a donation or refer a child, please give us a call at (661) 716-8000 or go to our website for more information and forms: OptimalHospiceFoundation.com.

Employee Giving Campaign surpasses goal

Thank you to Optimal’s employees for supporting the Foundation in a BIG way! In 2013 team members across all Optimal Health Services locations participated in the Employee Giving Campaign with employees donating more than $31,500 to support our mission with an overall participation rate of 74%.

“I know the people who work for Optimal are amazing, but the overwhelming support the Foundation receives from the employees has exceeded anything I could have imagined. Not just monetary support, but overall interest in what we do, identifying opportunities, assistance with sponsorships, volunteering and more. I am so blessed to have the opportunity to be the director of our Foundation,” said Cherie Shoemake.

Bakersfield Camp at Gergen Ranch
Session I for ages 8 to 12
Sunday, Aug. 3 – Tuesday, Aug. 5
Session II for ages 12 to 16
Wednesday, Aug. 6 – Friday, Aug. 8

Fresno Camp at Camp Oakhurst, Coarsegold
For ages 8 to 16
Friday, July 11 – Sunday, July 13

Referral forms are available at OptimalHospiceFoundation.com

Stay up to date, make donations and get more information at OptimalHospiceFoundation.com

We’re on Facebook too!

2014 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 10  
Optimal Cares Concert Event – Bakersfield

May 10  
Ride for Awareness – American Legion Riders – Porterville

July 11-13  
Kids Camp – Fresno

August 3-8  
Kids Camp – Bakersfield

September 12  
Golf in the Sun & Under the Stars Tournament – Bakersfield

November TBD  
Clay Shoot – Bakersfield

December 2-15  
Light Up A Life Celebrations

Ice Cream Socials were held to thank employees for reaching the campaign goal. This perfect sundae was made by Optimal’s Annisa Zepada.
American Legion Riders Chapter 20 Porterville

Ride for Awareness

Saturday, May 10 • 7:30 a.m.

Registration 7:30 - 9 a.m. • Blessing 9:15 a.m. • Ride starts at 9:30 a.m.

Ride begins and ends at American Legion Post 20
1901 W. Olive Ave., Porterville

Mail in registration no later than May 6 to
American Legion Riders Chapter 20
31 N. Fir, Porterville, CA 93257
include email address for donation confirmation

Advance tickets:
$20 single rider • $30 double

At the door:
$25 single rider • $35 double

Entry fee includes poker hand
Lunch and ride pins free to the first 100 participants

Breakfast served by the Ladies Auxiliary
Unit 20, is available for $7 from 7:30 to 9 a.m.

Proceeds will go to the Optimal Hospice Foundation Kids Camps

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Thank you to everyone who joined in our uplifting Light Up A Life Community Celebrations honoring and remembering loved ones and friends who had been a special part of our lives. The celebrations were held Nov. 23 – Dec. 12 throughout our service areas. Thank you to our generous location sponsors:

**Bakersfield Family Medical Center**: Bakersfield, Kern River Valley, Taft and Tehachapi

**Well-Being Senior Solutions Holistic In-Home Care**: Fresno

**Doctors Medical Center**: Modesto

**Roger S. Good Cancer Center**: Porterville

**Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel**: Visalia and Tulare

**Wagner Heights and Vintage Fair Nursing and Rehabilitation**: Stockton

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Optimal Cares

Thursday, April 10, 2014
Nile Nightclub • 1721 19th Street, Bakersfield
5:30 - 7:00 p.m. Heavy Hors D’Oeuvres & Silent Auction
Concert begins at 7:00 p.m.
Tickets $60 each. Reserved table for 4 is $300 and premier table for 6 is $500.

Featuring:
A Concert by Singer, Songwriter and Musician, Ry Bradley

Contact the Foundation office for more information, sponsorship details or to purchase tickets - 661.716.8000.
* All proceeds benefit Optimal Hospice Foundation
The following individuals and organizations generously contributed to Optimal Hospice Foundation in 2013. On behalf of the patients and families we serve, thank you for your support.

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Susan Lynch
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Centre
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Renee Rager
Barbara Rea
Gertrude Reeves
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Paul R. Richardson
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Sarah Rodriguez
Jim & Roselyn Rogers
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C. L. Ruiz
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Carol Salmonson
Carla Sarkisian
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Betty E Scott
Phyllis Scott
Nancy Sims
H. B. Smith
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Renee Soriano
William & Maris Soule
Geri Sperling
Maria Spomer
Linda Star
Diane Steitz
Hazel Steitz
Larry Sterling
Roger & Arlana Stewart
Carol Stubbefield
Beth Stukkie
Robert & Evona Sulfenfuss
Betty Sundermeier
Helen B. Taashian
Vince & Ginger Tempesta
Dean Beverly Tilly
Michael A Tinoco
Delores Topham
Tri-L Brush Shredding
Dan & Dolores Trigueiro-Lee
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Leona Urmy
Ruth Urrizola
Douglas & Marie Uyesaka
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Andrew & Rosemary Vartanian
Frank & Diane Vasquez
Victor Packing, Inc.
Lynda Vitucci
Joe & Patricia Vived
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Loletta Ward
Gerald & Rosemary Waters
Well-Being Senior Solutions
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Windham Residents
Association
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Ronald S. Adams
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Hazel Bates
Cheri Bettencourt
Marisa Boegel
Rick & Julie Brazil
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Josephine Chihil
Cheryl Cross
Scott De Moss
Doctors Medical Center of
Modesto
James & Linda Dom
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Tina Ellis
Susan Escobedo
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Brandy Harlass
Verdie & Joyce Harper
Joyce Hebert
Betty Henderson
Betty Huff
Eric A. Ivory
Barbara Johnson
Joseph Phelps Vineyards
Patrick Kelleher
Joselina Kimmel
Kunihiro & Lucy Kishaba
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Ida Mendes
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Carol & Olivia Nay
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Satnam Singh
Michael & Christine Smith
Deborah Snead
Robert Stroud
Lorilee Sutter
Loretta Sue Tachovsky
Ted & Nancy Tateyama
Jean Tomlinson
Dorothy Torbik
The Tumminello Family
Virginia & William
Jennifer Woodmansee
Traci Young

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Michelle Campbell
Keri Coleman
Charlene Macadangdang
Jeff Nanquil
Kelly Nobriga
Kirsten Roxas
Susie Targowski
Vintage Faire Nursing &
Rehabilitations
Wagner Heights Nursing &
Rehab

VISALIA
Barbara Abbott
Adair & Evans
Adrian Nunes Dairy-Farming
Luciano & Mary Aguiar
Beverly Aldaco
Gayla Alderette
Christine Alto
American Legion Riders
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Thank You for Your Support

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Alice Armstrong
Gilbert & Betty Ashford
Dale Atkins, Contractor
Barbara Avila
Margaret Ropes Baker
Larry Ballerstein
Paula Basch-Austin
Jon Bassett
Thomas & Kimberly Beck
Rebecca Benavente
Ira Galvan Benavides
Robert Berger
Cherilyn Birdwell
Shirley Boen
James & Juanita Botkin
Robert Bottoms
Boyd’s Electric Motors, Inc.
Becky Buckingham
Brian & Debra Burgdorf
Sharon Byus
California Pacers RV Club
Pat Calles
Frank & Arel Canales
Maurene Catto
Mary Ann Clark
Cliff & Lorraine Cleek
Jerome Clemens
Jim Clemens
Leroy Costa
David Cotta
James Crow
Curtimade Dairy, Inc.
Gary & Carolyn Davis
Gail Deathriage-Weltre
Rosemary Defino
Cornelius Devries
Jesus Diaz
Ronnie Dilday
Judy Dlugonski
John & Merry Lee Dormann
Sandra Dotson
Sally Doty
Downtown Visalians
Jane Drumright
Glen & L. Virginia Duyser
Dixie Eich
Isabel Enos
Jessica Facio
William Farrell
Ron & Joyce Foley
Terri Franco
Stanley Freitas
David & Sandra Garth
Elizabeth F. Gill
Patricia Gomez
Estella Gonzales
Dean & Coleen Grabow
C. H. Grambusch
Diane Gravance
Paul & Betty Green
Richard & Dona Grissom
Ernest Groce
Roger & Cheryl Hakker
Keith Hansen
Happy Honkers
Jannie Harlow
Rose Harris
Charlene Hatcher
Margaret Hernandez
Jean Higginbotham
Jim Hinz
Betty Hochi
Hocking Denton Palmquist
Duaine & Anna Hudson
Carolyn Holmes
William L. Houghton
Tammy Howell
Pat Huston
Darla Hutsell
Imoto Farms, Inc.
Janice Jacques
Laura & Dara Johnson
Ronda Johnson
Judy Kenney
Dr. Owen Kim
Raymond King
Christine Lawry-Hawkings
LoBue Brothers Citrus
Growers
Ben Lopes
Carl & Linda Losson
Bob & Nadine Luis
Amy M. Maciel
Maddox Family
Mary Madrid
Richard Madrid
Marilyn Madruca
Dean & Hope Martin
Elizabeth Martin
Kenneth & Virginia McKee
Joe & Teresa Menezes Jr.
Mark & Aleta Merritt
Terece Miller
Imari Moreno
Bennie Myrick
New Era Farm Service
Daryl & Vicki Nicholson
Jody Nicholson
Bill Nielsen
Amelia Nunez
Wendy Oliveira
Sally Olson
Sam Owens
Clifton & Barbara Paregien, Jr.
Avelina Parreira
Danny & Beverly Payne
Pelzter Farm Management, Inc.
Janie Pendergrass
Imogene Perrine
Darren & Diana Peterson
Duane & Rose Marie Piccano
Dolores Picano
Maria F. Pimentel
Betty Pratt
Provet & Pritchard
Joyce Reis
Michelle Requejo
Frances Richard
Mitzi C. Ruiz
Albert Sa
Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel
Kurt & Leshia Schmidt
Scott Ellis Enterprises LLC
George & Sally Serpa
Bruce & Jeanne Shannon
Gene & Patricia Shaw
Delores Sierra
Lynn Simmons
Larry & Gloria Simonetti
Morgan Simons
Lydia Spratt
Robert C. Stearns
William Strand
June Symiczek
C. A. Tabellario Family
Edward & Cathy Tarvin
Harold & Audrey Tarvin
Clarence & Francene Taylor
Roger & Traci Terpstra
Carole Terry
Christina Teso
Barbara Tienken
Susan Tillotson
Mary Toews
Tulare County Deputy Sheriff’s Assoc.
U. S. Cold Storage of California
Donald Uttenreither
Elitania Valencia
Valo Family
2014 Foundation Board of Directors

Back row from left: Lisa Belt, Doris Depew, Theresa Olson, Cherie Shoemake and Cherie Payne. Front row from left: Larry Bardin, Jim La Mar and Randy Raymond, Jr.,

Member Spotlight — Jim La Mar

Jim La Mar serves as president of the Board and has been a board member for more than three years. He became involved by participating in the Foundation’s annual golf tournament. Jim expressed how much fun he had at the event, and he was invited to get involved with the Foundation.

Jim said, “There is a lot of appreciation for working on the Board. Cherie makes it fun and makes sure to bring on lots of help so that we don’t feel overworked.”

“The Foundation is based on a need that many don’t think about — end-of-life care and the needs of others like spouses, parents and children after that. It’s an uncomfortable subject at first, but the good that it does and the lives that it touches is reward enough.”

Jim is president of Greenlawn Funeral Homes, Cemeteries and Cremations. In addition to the Optimal Hospice Foundation, he serves as an advisory board member of Southern California Teen Challenge and is a board member of Stockdale Christian School. In his free time Jim likes to watch his son play soccer, play golf, travel to the coast and spend time with family.

President
Jim La Mar
Greenlawn Funeral Homes

Vice President
Doris Depew
Valley Republic Bank

Secretary
Lisa Belt
Watson Realty

Treasurer
Theresa Olson
Remax Reality

At-Large
Larry Bardin
Kern County Superintendent of Schools
Randy Raymond, Jr.
Raymond’s Trophy & Awards

Foundation Director
Cherie Shoemake
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.

Saturday mornings
Somerdale Place
6075 N. Marks Ave.
Call (559) 320-4000 for info.

Lake Isabella
Wednesdays
1:30–3 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.–12 p.m.
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
4568 Feather River Dr., Ste. C

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

Support groups available through Optimal Hospice Care

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