

## Hospice of Santa Barbara “Community” Speaks Out

### Lindsay & Chase McFadden, I Have a Friend® program mentees



Lindsay and Chase came to Hospice of Santa Barbara, Inc. in 2005, when their father passed away.

*“I was really shaken and was having problems with my friends and taking it out on the wrong people. When I came here, it helped me open up, feel comfortable again, and get back on track.”* (Chase McFadden)

Both Lindsay and Chase joined the I Have a Friend® mentor program, which pairs children who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling with an adult who had a similar loss in their childhood. They both described the experience as extremely helpful and comfortable, and their mentors as someone who really understands how they were feeling: *“When your friends don’t really understand and just tell you ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry,’ your mentor actually understands and can help you through it.”* (Chase McFadden)

Individual counseling and the guidance of a trained mentor have helped Lindsay and Chase open up and talk about the death of their father more freely. Lindsay currently coordinates social events for the younger I Have a Friend® mentees. *“I lost my dad when I was in sixth grade, and for kids to lose even younger, I just can’t even imagine. I just want to help out.”* (Lindsay McFadden)

### Geno Isola, Case Management Program



Geno was introduced to Hospice of Santa Barbara by his doctors on the Palliative Care Consult Service Team at Cottage Hospital while being treated for cancer. He described his first contact with his Hospice of Santa Barbara Case Manager as an extraordinary experience:

*“The moment she walked in, it was incredible.”*

HSB recently helped arrange a trip for him to see his family, who he hasn’t seen in five years, through the Dream Foundation. This had been something he really wanted, but couldn’t do it on his own. Geno said he didn’t care much about life after he lost his wife, and was homeless for a while, sleeping on the streets. Because of the support of his Case Manager, Geno now lives in a nice place and has motivation to move forward and live life.

*“If you really want your money to go to something, give to Hospice of Santa Barbara. You can really feel the care.”*

**Carol Sharpe, I Have a Friend® program mentor**



After seeing an ad in the paper about mentors for the I Have a Friend® program, Carol felt as though the ad was written just for her. Once she completed the volunteer training at Hospice of Santa Barbara, Carol was matched with a young boy who lost his father at age 11, just as she had. The boy was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, which is characterized by impaired social interaction. It took time for Carol to connect with her mentee, who often avoided eye contact.

During one visit, they looked at his family photos, and when Carol told him that her father died when she was 11, the boy immediately moved his gaze directly into her eyes and said with amazement, *"Really?"* Carol marks that moment as what *"established a bond, and from that time we grew in the sense of trust. We have become best of friends."* Carol and her mentee have been together for over six years. Carol says she is more confident in giving support having received support from HSB.

*"As far as service to the community, Hospice of Santa Barbara offers so much, it enriches so many lives, and as far as the I Have a Friend program, I cannot help but reflect – I wish there was something like this when I was 11 years old, and I lost my father and brother. And I just am so thankful for Hospice of Santa Barbara."*

**Jacqueline Marston, Board Member, Patient-Care Volunteer and Client**



Jacqueline runs *Villa Alamar*, an Alzheimer's facility in Santa Barbara. She learned about Hospice of Santa Barbara through a lecture taught by former HSB Executive Director, Gail M. Rink, where Jackie realized she knew little about death given she runs a facility where people die often. At the advice of Gail Rink, Jackie became a Patient-Care Volunteer. Jackie recalls that her experience as a volunteer has helped her grow both personally and spiritually.

When her brother-in-law was killed, her niece and nephew came to Hospice of Santa Barbara, which *"made a huge difference."* Jackie reflects about HSB:

*"They really get the concept of family here; you don't just serve the person who's dying, you really serve the whole dynamic of family, and so it's a community world here, in its biggest level and in its smallest level."*

Now one of the newest members of the Board of Directors, Jackie is ready to use her skills as a natural leader and experience in end-of-life care to give back to Hospice of Santa Barbara, as the organization has given freely to her family.

### **Cody King, Patient-Care Volunteer**



A student at Westmont College, Cody became interested in volunteering for Hospice of Santa Barbara because he wanted to get better connected with the community beyond his college campus.

*“I would definitely recommend the volunteer training to college students or anyone because of the education. It was invaluable.”*

As a trained Patient-Care Volunteer, Cody has helped children of a Hospice of Santa Barbara patient with homework, driven patients to appointments, and sat at the bedside and talked with a patient. He believes our society doesn't place enough importance on end-of-life caring, and that it is important to recognize it. Volunteering at HSB has been a rewarding experience for Cody, and he says it's definitely changed the way he looks at death and dying. He says that, as a Hospice of Santa Barbara Volunteer: *“My experience has been very life-affirming.”*

### **Jeanne Williams-Dietz, Client**



When Jeanne's daughter, Christie, was diagnosed with cancer, the Cancer Center of Santa Barbara introduced them to Hospice of Santa Barbara. Jeanne had lost another daughter prior to Christie's diagnosis and had felt grief before and was extremely open to receiving help, especially as she became the primary caregiver of Christie's four children. *“At one point we kept Christie's illness from her children, but Hospice of Santa Barbara helped guide us to prep the children and ourselves to understand that she is sick. They gave us the tools to help the kids and ourselves to do this. It's like they held my hand and guided me for things I didn't know to expect or things that I didn't know to do. It was so helpful, and I felt that I probably wouldn't have been able to do it without them.”*

Jeanne has learned how to bring out the hurt and pain and how to go on in life. She said she felt gifted and safe because of HSB's support:

*“It's almost like someone's hugging you, saying 'we're here with you, and you are not alone.'”*

Jeanne says that she's happy once again, and that her grandchildren have smiles on their faces. She encourages people going through a loss to take the step and seek help from HSB and receive the guidance she received: *“It's a beautiful way to heal.”*

**Gina Becchetti, Volunteer, LUAL Committee Member**



While searching through the Internet for a place to volunteer, Gina found out about Hospice of Santa Barbara and quickly became interested in the organization. She felt the desire to go above and beyond her day-to-day routine by giving back to the community and making a difference in someone's life. She signed up to volunteer and says the extensive Patient-Care Volunteer Training from HSB was one of most amazing experiences she ever had: *"It's so well-worth it."* Gina

continues to be a volunteer and help in numerous ways, serving on multiple committees, and explains that there are limitless possibilities of how you can grow with the organization: *"When anyone comes to the building, they get a feeling of being welcomed no matter who they are and no matter what reason they have to be there."*

Gina wants people to see the wide array of services HSB provides and to know that the tiniest bit that you can offer will mean the world to someone here. She also adds, *"People are so unfortunate to be in very difficult situations, and they need all the support they can get."* At HSB, she says, people will sit here and listen because everyone is genuinely interested in hearing how you are. She also wants to educate the community, so they know it's not all depressing:

*"The light that comes out of these people and the light being brought in from the people around them completely changes how you see others and react to them and your day-to-day experience."*

To those considering giving to HSB, she says: *"You can make a huge difference with so little of your time—or so little of your money if you don't have the time."*