

After Your Loss



PALOMAR HEALTH
Bereavement Support Services

www.PalomarHealth.org/Bereavement

A Message to Survivors

(Adapted from a letter by Elizabeth “Betsy” Ross)

As terrible as your loss seems now, you will survive it, even though that may seem unbelievable. But for now, you may be experiencing an overwhelming mixture of thoughts and feelings of despair, longing, anger, guilt, frustration, questions and even understanding. You seek relief – you need time to heal. It is a journey and you must work at it.

And so – **cry**. The pain is real, but the tears are healing. Often we must struggle through an emotion to find the relief beyond.

Talk. Talk about your loss and pain. Don’t hide or deny real feelings. Tell others that you need them.

Search for answers. Over and over you will ask, “Why?” It is a question that you must ask. Although you may never learn the answer, realize that it is important to wrestle with the question for a while. Eventually you will be ready to give up the search, but it will take time.

Speak. Speak often and freely of your loved one. He or she will always be a part of you. To keep silent about the deceased denies their existence. To speak of them affirms the lives they touched. Believe that, in time, the pain of loss fades and is replaced by precious memories shared.

Grieve. Give yourself permission to feel and express all of your grief feelings, even anger and guilt. Know that in order to heal, we must first feel and express the pain.

Believe. At a time like this, it is normal to doubt yourself and to struggle with spiritual beliefs. Many find strength and renewed faith as they work through their feelings of loss. Seek out those who can provide spiritual guidance to help you.

Ask for help. The pain of grief can be overwhelming. Don’t hesitate to ask for assistance if you experience: hopelessness; panic; headaches or stomach aches; ongoing school problems; the desire to cope by using drugs or alcohol; new or unusual behaviors or thoughts of hurting or killing yourself. While it may be normal to have these experiences, you need support to help you deal with them. A parent, teacher, counselor, friend or member of the clergy can help you get the support you need.

Accept. Accept that in some strange way, this death offers you an opportunity to find new meaning, and to appreciate each moment of friendship, love and life.

Choose. We cannot control all that happens to us, but we can control how we choose to respond. When we choose to grieve constructively and creatively, we come to value life with a new awareness. Choose to express your pain in healthy ways. Choose to share this common loss with family and friends.

Choose to be a survivor.

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A list of local mortuaries in and around San Diego County.



When Someone You Love Dies

We would like to take a moment to express our deepest sympathy for the loss of your loved one. Here are some answers to often-asked questions about where to turn next to help you and your family.

Hearing the News

No matter how prepared you are, the loss of a loved one is always an emotional, and sometimes very traumatic, occasion. Calling upon your family and friends can help you through a very difficult time.

Chaplain Services

Palomar Medical Center provides on-call chaplain services 24-hours-a-day. You may also request that your own spiritual leader be contacted. Ask your nurse for more information.

Social Work Services

Social work services are available 7-days-a-week at Palomar Health. Ask your nurse for more information.

Saying Goodbye

If you choose, you may see your loved one to say goodbye after he or she has passed. This can sometimes make death seem more real and help you better cope with the grieving process.

Organ and Tissues Donation

All California hospitals are required by law to ask the next-of-kin if they would consent to an organ or tissue donation. You are free to decline. No pressure is placed on the family to participate in donation. If a donation is made, Life Sharing will be contacted and someone from Life Sharing may come to the hospital to meet with you.

Medical Examiner's Office

The nurse is required to call the Medical Examiner's Office upon the death of some patients. Many times, only a phone call is necessary before the deceased is free to be sent to the mortuary. If the Medical Examiner needs to perform an autopsy, you will be notified. They will transport the body from the hospital to San Diego, where the autopsy will be performed at the Medical Examiner's office. They will advise you regarding when burial or cremation may take place.

- For more information, please visit: <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/me/families/familygen.html>
- To contact the Medical Examiner's office, call **858.694.2895**

Non-medical Examiner's Autopsy

If you desire an autopsy, you are responsible for the cost of the procedure. Notify the attending physician to make a request. An attending physician may independently request an autopsy with your consent. The autopsy may then be performed by the health system at no charge to you. A hospital autopsy is a quality-control procedure, during which the attending physician may learn the exactness of a patient's diagnosis and evaluate the effectiveness of therapy in relation to that diagnosis. This physician may also learn what complications and other diseases, if any, were present.

Death Certificate

The administrator of the mortuary or crematory you choose is responsible for issuing and handling all aspects of the patient's death certificate. It is a good idea to order multiple death certificates, as you will need to send them to multiple places.

Patient's Belongings

In most cases, the deceased patients' valuables and personal belongings are given to a family member, public guardian or conservator at the time of death. Identification and a signature from the member, public guardian or conservator are required to release them. If you have questions or concerns regarding valuables or belongings of a loved one, or need information on how and when to pick up valuables or belongings, please call the appropriate facility:

- Palomar Medical Center: **442.281.5000**
- Palomar Health Downtown Campus: **760.739.3000**
- Pomerado Hospital: **858.613.4000**

Memorial Gifts

If you, a family member or friend would like to make a memorial gift in honor of a loved one, you may do so by contacting the charity of your choice. Most charitable agencies will thank the donor and notify the family of the gift.

Indigent Burial & Cremation Program

The Indigent Burial Program pays for the disposition of bodies of deceased San Diego County residents whose estate cannot provide for a burial.

To qualify for Indigent Burial, the deceased must meet the following criteria:

- They have no estate from which to pay the cost of a funeral.
- They have no family who can afford to provide the service.
- They are not eligible for burial assistance from the Social Security Administration or Veterans Administration.

For more information, call **858.694.3500**.



Experiencing Loss

During this difficult and trying time, it is normal to experience a range of emotional and physical problems.

Emotionally, you may experience the following:

- Sadness and/or depression
- Forgetfulness
- Feelings of guilt or anger about things that happened or didn't happen in the relationship with the deceased
- Crying easily and/or unexpectedly
- Mood swings
- Feeling uncomfortable around other people
- Not wanting want to be alone
- Feeling a sense of the death being unreal, or that it didn't actually happen
- Feelings of emptiness, or having been cheated
- Haunted by thoughts "if only things had happened differently"
- Fearing what will happen next
- Doubts or questions concerning why the death occurred
- Desire to run away, or to become very busy in order to avoid the pain of loss
- Feeling like you're "going crazy" when overwhelmed with the intensity of feelings

Physically, you may experience the following:

- Tightness in the throat or in the muscles
- Heaviness or pressure in the chest
- Inability to sleep
- Periods of nervousness or even panic
- Lack of desire to eat, or desire to overeat
- Experience of visual or auditory hallucinations of the loved one who has died
- Headaches or stomach/intestinal disorders
- Lack of energy
- Inability to concentrate

Taking Care of Yourself

Recognize that grief is a process. People need to work through grief at their own pace. Be gentle with yourself! Here are some suggestions to help you work through the grief process:

- Be willing to surrender to the grief process. Allow yourself the time and the right to grieve.
- Be a healer. Listen to others with compassion and without judgment.
- Allow people to have their own grief experience.
- Talk about it. Find someone you can talk to. This helps to process the feelings you are experiencing.
- Create a Ceremony. A ceremony can take many forms. Consider an actual ceremony or something creative, like writing a poem, keeping a journal, planting a tree, writing a letter to the deceased, praying or adopting a cause (MADD, e.g.), etc. There are healthy ways to develop closure on this chapter of your life and help you create the desire to move on with a healthy, happy, productive life.

The Grief Process

Grief is not something that any of us want to work through. However, an understanding of the process can help to normalize what we are feeling and reassure us that we can once again experience a fulfilling life. Grief can be quite complicated and diverse.

The following grief process guides us through common stages. Not all stages are sequential and we may revisit some stages.

Denial

It is normal to experience a state of disbelief or numbness about a loss. We try to keep painful feelings at bay until we are ready to process them. When we are ready, acknowledging feeling of loss will help begin the healing process.

Depression

With any sense of loss, we want to withdraw from life. Life seems to lack the spark it once had. Taking time to experience the loss also aids in the healing process.

Guilt

Often, we ask ourselves, "What could I have done differently?" The feeling that "they left me/us" is very common.

Reconstruction

During reconstruction, we develop a sense of closure and acceptance of the death. We develop a feeling of beginning a fresh new chapter in life.

What happens if we do not allow ourselves to work through the stages of grief?

People who do not work through their grief may display behavior such as: overeating, overspending, acting out, lashing out, burying themselves in their work, etc., all to avoid the difficult or painful feelings. Not acknowledging the grief can negatively affect the quality of our lives. It is critically important to allow ourselves to grieve. There are many support groups available to help process grief. It can be of great value to know that you are not alone.

Are there resources if I'm feeling overwhelmed and don't feel like I can cope?

Yes. Call the Mental Health Hotline for help at 211.

Bereavement Support Groups

Bereavement groups may play an important role in your emotional well-being as you are confronted with the loss of a loved one. Palomar Health encourages you to seek support from credible groups that can provide you with information, advice and understanding from peers and medical professionals.

Some people who have participated in bereavement groups say the experience gave them an emotional connection when they felt isolated from friends and family. A group can provide and share information on how a bereaved person can cope during the first year after a loved one's death. People involved say this exchange of information is one of the most valuable elements of participating in a support or bereavement group. Moreover, support and bereavement groups offer people the opportunity to release powerful emotions they may otherwise keep to themselves. Health-care providers say support groups can improve a participant's mood and decrease psychological distress.

Support Groups

Elizabeth Hospice Drop-In Groups

Support groups are offered in San Diego, Carlsbad and Escondido. To sign up, please call their Counseling Department **800.797.2050** or visit www.elizabethhospice.org/news-and-events/drop-in-groups.

GriefShare

GriefShare aggregates independently-run groups. Groups are generally run by a religious institution and may charge a fee for learning materials. The times and locations of groups vary. To sign up, please visit www.griefshare.org and enter your zip code to find groups in your area.

Meetup.com Support Groups

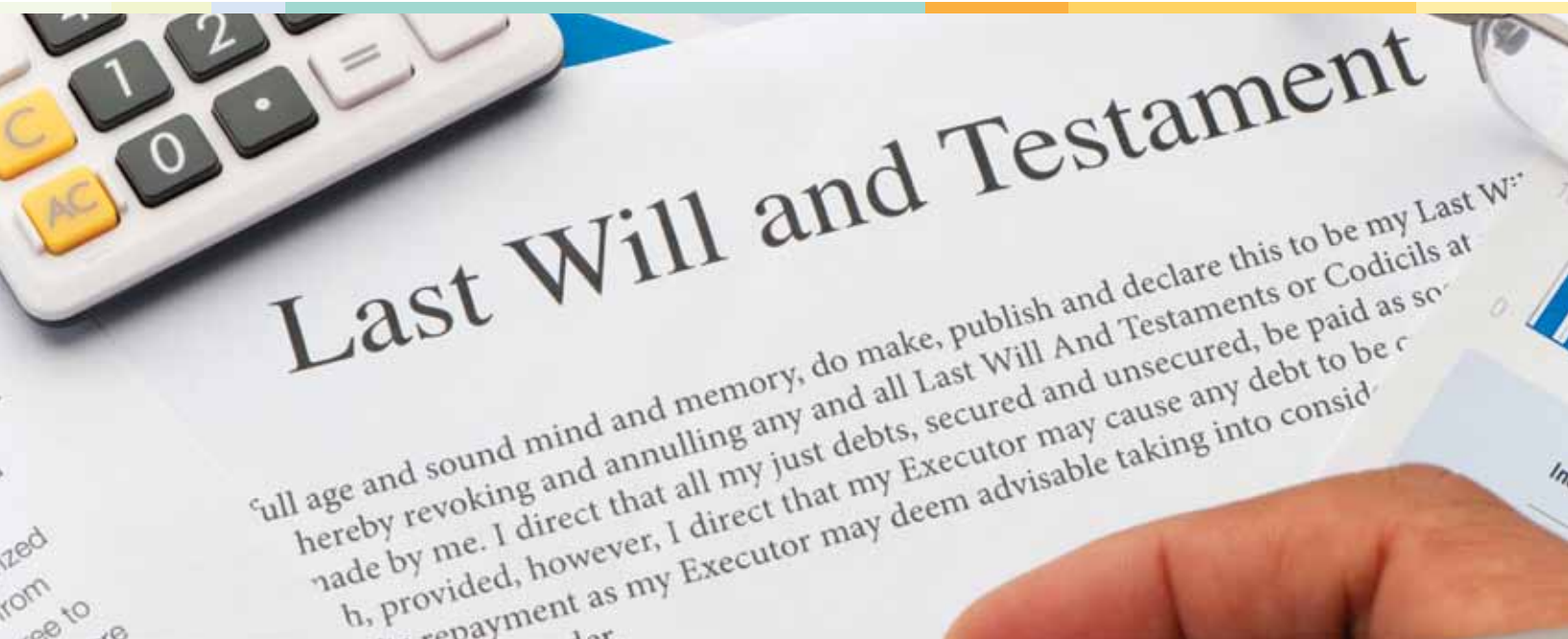
Meetup.com allows individuals to set up their own grief support groups in their neighborhood. To see available groups, or start your own, please visit www.grief-support.meetup.com.

VITAS Innovative Hospice Drop-In Groups

To sign up, please call **858.503.4913**.

When a support group isn't enough

Sometimes people who lose loved ones may require help beyond a support group. If a support group isn't providing the help you need, contact your care provider to discuss your situation, or call **211**.



Checklist: After Your Loss

After your loss:

- Collect valuables and personal items before leaving the patient's room. See page 6 for contact information if you've left something behind.**
- Decide on time and place of funeral or memorial services.
- Make a list of immediate family, close friends, employers or business colleagues to be notified by phone.
- If flowers are to be omitted, pick an appropriate memorial to which gifts may be made.
- Write an obituary.
 - You can include: age, place of birth, cause of death*, occupation, college degrees and memberships held, military service, outstanding work and list of survivors in family. Give time and place of services. Deliver in-person, or by phone or e-mail to local newspapers. **Including cause of death is optional, but helpful if you would like to direct funds toward an organization or a charity.*
 - To place an obituary in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, call **866.411.4140**, visit www.utsandiego.com/memoriams/ or contact your local community newspaper for information regarding an obituary.
- Arrange for members of family, or close friends, to take turns answering the door or phone, keeping a careful record of calls and visits.
- Arrange appropriate childcare, if applicable.
- Seek help in coordinating the supply of food for the next days.

- Consider special needs of the household, such as cleaning.
- Arrange hospitality for visiting family and friends.
- Select pallbearers and notify.
- Notify lawyer and executor of the will.
- Plan for disposal of flowers after funeral (hospitals or rest homes).
- Prepare list of people to receive acknowledgements of flowers, calls, etc. Send appropriate acknowledgements.
- Check all life and casualty insurance and death benefits, including Social Security, credit union, trade union, fraternal and military. Check also on income for survivors from these sources.
- Promptly check on all debts and installment payments. Some may carry insurance clauses that will cancel them. If there is to be a delay in meeting payments, consult with creditors and ask for more time before payment is due.
- If deceased is living alone, notify utilities and landlords.
- Tell post office where to send mail.
- Check with the Health Department or mortuary regarding the death certificate number.

Checklist: Who to notify

Government Agencies:

- Social Security Administration, **800.772.1213**
- Veteran's Administration **800.827.1000** (if decedent was formerly in the military)
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service, **800.269.5170** (military retiree receiving benefits)
- Office of Personnel Management, **888.767.6738** (if decedent was not a U.S. citizen)
- State Department of Motor Vehicles (if decedent had a driver's license or state ID)

Financial Companies:

- Credit card and merchant card companies
- Banks, savings and loan associations and credit unions
- Mortgage companies and lenders
- Financial planners, stockbrokers and pension providers

Credit Reporting Agencies:

Immediately contact all three national credit agencies by telephone to report the death. Instruct them to list all accounts as “Closed. Account Holder is Deceased.” Follow up with a letter to each agency sent via certified mail. Be sure to retain a copy for your records. You may also request a credit report to obtain a list of all creditors and to review recent credit activities. A sample notification letter is available at www.PalomarHealth.org/Bereavement.

Experian

■ Phone: **888.397.3742**

■ Address: P.O. Box 9701, Allen, TX 75013

Equifax

■ Phone: **800.525.6285**

■ Address: P.O. Box 105069, Atlanta, GA 30348

TransUnion

■ Phone: **800.680.7289**

■ Address: P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834

Memberships (examples):

Professional associations and unions

Health clubs and athletic clubs

Automobile Clubs

Public Library

Alumni Clubs, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Veterans’ organizations and clubs

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)

Do Not Contact Lists:

For a small fee, you can list the decedent’s name on the Deceased Do Not Contact List that is maintained by the Direct Marketing Association.

Direct Marketing Association (register at www.ims-dm.com/cgi/ddnc.php)



A Note From Palomar Health’s Chaplain:

“Bereavement and loss evoke deep and varied emotions for loved ones. Just as every life story is unique, so is the manner in which family and friends say good-bye. Acknowledging the passing of a person is influenced by culture, religion, and a variety of other factors. Some people celebrate passing from life with a party, others with a wake. Some people observe a celebration of life, others through a memorial service.

The following article by Sarah York explores the importance of saying good-bye. Though she specifically writes about a funeral, the greater principle she is communicating is the need to give sorrow words. We hope you find this helpful as you mourn your loss, and consider how you will remember the life of your loved one.”

Giving Sorrow Words: Why We Need Funerals

By Sarah York

I frequently speak with people who say they do not want any services held when they die. One woman in her 90’s told me just after attending a service for a friend, “That was a really nice service, Sarah, but I’m not going to have one of those when I die.”

I smiled as I replied, “Eunice, you won’t be in a position to have much to say about that.”

I went on to tell her that her family would need it and so would many of us in the congregation, and we would want to hold a service. She and I have both affectionately retold the story of this conversation – she to reaffirm her initial desire in spite of what others do, and I to make the point that the ritual is not for her but for those who love her, will miss her and must go on living without her.

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Eunice says that she just doesn't want anyone to make a fuss over her, and she means it. I believe that most people who choose to avoid ritual, however, do so for one of two reasons. Either they do not want to deal with the emotions that are evoked by death, or they cannot conceive of a ritual apart from a traditional religious context that is not relevant for them. In some cases, they may be very private individuals who have never liked the idea of having people talk about them "behind their back."

Whatever the reasons, they are not sufficient. No exceptions. No matter what the circumstances of a life or a death, there is no reason not to mark the occasion of death with at least a simple private ceremony. Thus it is that I always counsel families to consider, with love, other ways to respect the intent of those who have requested "no services." Then we work to create a ceremony that will honor the person who died while giving the family an opportunity to celebrate a life and mourn a death.

"Give sorrow words," Shakespeare admonished. But how do you begin to think about planning for a ritual if you have no religious tradition or perhaps even a distaste for ritual in general? If you are alienated from your faith tradition, how do you draw what is still meaningful from it and include it in a personalized ritual? How do you create an appropriate context to give sorrow words? The thought of taking on such a task is daunting enough. Add to that the fact that many deaths occur suddenly and without warning, requiring that some of the arrangements be made within a matter of days.

The fear of taking on the responsibility for a ritual of death may be the greatest of all obstacles to be overcome. The best way to overcome the fear, however, is to do it, finding others who will help. Your confidence comes as you realize that others have done this and you can, too.

What is important is to find the appropriate level of comfort and participate according to what feels right. Too often participation of family members is minimal. Opportunities for ritual that will help them grieve are missed. It is just easier to leave it up to the professionals – undertakers, ministers, health-care workers – to take care of everything.

Most of what I know about how to create a memorial ritual I learned when I was thrown into the waters of that first year of ministry. When I suggest here that a person doesn't have to be a minister to do this, I am saying that this is the heart of life; it is where we all live. This is our spiritual work – to mark our losses and celebrate our love. It is not the work of funeral directors and ministers – it is the work of families and friends. We are the professionals who are there to assist them with their work. It is to the people I've been fortunate enough to assist that I offer gratitude, because they have known that I am just there to help them do what they have to do.

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Through the years, I have learned from many more families. Some of the rituals we devised grew quite naturally out of the rich soil of memory. Eleven grandchildren gather at one memorial, and while the oldest grandchild read a poem and shared some memories, the other ten all lit candles. Another family provided flowers at the door of the sanctuary and invited everyone who entered to take a flower and put it in a large basket in the front, thus creating a community bouquet. At the end of the service, each person was invited to take a flower from the bouquet.

For a woman who had been devoted to world peace, the space was decorated with international flags.

For a man who died of AIDS, a beautifully crafted panel for the AIDS Memorial Quilt was on display. Candles were lit in memory of others who had died of AIDS.

For a woman who had been a poet, a booklet of her poetry was put together and offered to friends and family who came to the service.

For a woman who found meaning in Native American traditions, the service began with an invocation to the four directions and ended with a Native American benediction.

Form follows function. If we want to celebrate a life, the possibilities are endless.

Music, of course is a universal medium for ritual. Too many people neglect to participate in this aspect of a memorial and let a funeral home select music for them. My experience is that funeral directors will work with families to give them what they want. There is no reason for not taking an active role and selecting music that contributes to the mood and meaning of the service. Bach may be perfect for one person, the Grateful Dead for another.

Yes, this is the family's work. If a person thinks to leave behind some requests and instructions, that makes the family's work easier. A member of one congregation, for example, asked for several selections of Beatles music to be played at her service. She had written a poem to her family that she wanted me to read. She left the rest up to us.

If a person doesn't indicate any particular wishes, however, that makes the family's work more meaningful. It invites family members to talk about what they need to do and what is right. It invites them to participate – to give sorrow words and music and gesture.

As they participate, they remember.

As they remember, they grieve.

As they grieve, they love.

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List of Local Mortuaries – North County

Nearby mortuaries are listed below. For a more complete, county-wide list, please visit PalomarHealth.org/Bereavement.

Alhiser-Comer Mortuary

225 S. Broadway
Escondido, CA 92025
760.745.2162
info@alhiser-comer.com

All Faiths Mortuary & Crematory Services

1540 6th Avenue
San Diego, CA 92101
858.538.2158
wallyhobbs@msn.com

Allen Brothers Mortuary

435 Twin Oaks Valley Road
San Marcos, CA 92069
760.744.4522
sanmarcoschapel@allenbrothersmortuary.com

Allen Brothers Mortuary

1315 S. Santa Fe Avenue
Vista, CA 92083
760.726.2555
vistachapel@allenbrothersmortuary.com

American Cremation Service

1207 Carlsbad Village Drive, Suite D
Carlsbad, CA 92008
760.729.9182

American Cremation Service

135 W. Mission Avenue #102
Escondido, CA 92025
760.480.8483

Berry-Bell & Hall Fallbrook Mortuary, Inc. – Fallbrook

333 N. Vine Street
Fallbrook, CA 92028
760.728.1689
berrymhall@yahoo.com

Bonham Brothers & Stewart Mortuary

321-12th Street
Ramona, CA 92065
760.789.1678
bonhammortuary@gmail.com

California Funeral Alternatives – Escondido

1020 E. Pennsylvania Avenue
Escondido, CA 92025
760.737.2890
office@cafuneralt.com

California Funeral Alternatives – Poway

14168 Poway Road, Suite 106
Poway, CA 92064
858.842.3000
officepoway@yahoo.com

Cremation Services Incorporated

2570 Fortune Way
Vista, CA 92081
760.727.8906

Dearborn Memorial Park

14361 Tierra Bonita Road
Poway, CA 92064
858.748.5760

El Camino Memorial – Encinitas

340 Melrose Avenue
Encinitas, CA 92024

760.753.1143

England Family Mortuary

27135 Madison Avenue
Temecula, CA 92590

951.695.8555

info@englandfamilymortuary.com

Eternal Hills Mortuary & Memorial Park

1999 El Camino Real
Oceanside, CA 92054

760.754.6600

Fallbrook Masonic Cemetery

1177 Santa Margarita Drive
Fallbrook, CA 92028

760.723.0492

**Funeraria del Angel McLeod
McLeod Mortuary**

1919 East Valley Parkway
Escondido, CA 92027

760.745.2100

North County Cremation Service

635 N. Twin Oaks Valley Road, Suite 18
San Marcos, CA 92069

760.471.6301

nccremation@sbcglobal.net

Nuevo Memory Gardens

532 Ash Street
Ramona, CA 92065

760.789.0136

Oak Hill Memorial Park

2640 Glenridge Road
Escondido, CA 92027

760.745.1781

Oceanside Mortuary

602 S. Coast Highway
Oceanside, CA 92054

760.722.4264

osidemortuary@gmail.com

Poway-Bernardo Mortuary

13243 Poway Road
Poway, CA 92064

858.748.4101

art_pbm@yahoo.com

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church

16275 Pomerado Road
Poway, CA 92064

858.487.2159

Trident Society

9242 Miramar Road, Suite 37
San Diego, CA 92126

858.527.1585

john.greeney@tridentsociety.com

Valley Center Cemetery

28953 Miller Drive
Valley Center, CA 92082

760.749.1186



Notes:

