



*...because everyone has a story*

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Contact: **Patrice Goldberg**  
Ever *After* CELEBRATIONS  
tel: **714/633 7054**  
mobile: 949/510 5641  
info@everaftercelebrations.com  
www.everaftercelebrations.com

## **CELEBRATE THE LIFE, NOT THE LOSS:**

### **End of Life 'Events' On the Rise**

*To honor a loved one means to pay tribute to the life they are living or have lived. End of Life Celebrations are growing in popularity and providing families with an alternative and more inspiring way to remember someone dear.*

THE TRADITIONAL FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE in an uncomfortable setting with sad and unfamiliar background music is no longer the only choice for a family in mourning. Where previous generations have found peace in religion and silent resignation, there are more signs to believe that this generation will not be so complacent. The baby boom generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, have become more secular and less inclined to accept the traditional constraints of the past.

Today the option of bringing together family and friends for a *life* celebration – no matter how large or small of a group – is proving to be a better and healthier action towards the healing and adjustment to a difficult loss. Families are opting to assemble where the menu, music, flowers, photography and lighting can be designed to fit the personality, preferences and style of the dearly departed.

“The almost immediate reaction to news of a death is shock and disbelief. We rarely want to admit that someone dear has reached the end of his or her life,” explains Teresa Marchese, president of Right At Home in-home care and assistance in Laguna Hills, “however a family or community that understands the value of celebration as a means of support for the survivors may also experience an easier path towards grief recovery.”

“Baby Boomers are all about being in control,” said Patrice Goldberg of Ever *After* Celebrations, who started her company after a difficult memorial experience for two of her own family members. “This generation wants to manage everything, from the food to the words spoken to the order of the service. And funerals are an area where families often feel vulnerable and out of control.”

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What they want, she said, are celebrations that reflect their lives and tastes. One family she served asked for a memorial service on a specific green of its brother's favorite golf course, "because that's where he spent most of his time and was most happy," Goldberg explained. Another family wanted a group picnic in the shadow of a favorite mountain peak.

Over half of California families now choose cremation, according to the National Funeral Directors Association US cremation statistics. This typically gives them the time to plan without feeling overwhelmed or rushed.

A Celebration of Life is similar to other ceremonies in our lives. Like an anniversary, a graduation, a wedding, a baptism, a bar/bat mitzvah, a memorial is a rite of passage by which we recognize an important event that distinguishes our lives.

For more information about planning a Celebration of Life, call (714) 633-7054 or visit the website [www.everaftercelebration.com](http://www.everaftercelebration.com).

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***Inset to editorial:***

**Why plan a Celebration of Life? What's the point?** As difficult as it can be to discuss death, grief and funerals, it is ultimately more difficult and damaging to avoid the topic or to do nothing.

**A Celebration of Life:**

- Helps to acknowledge that someone we love has died
  - Oftentimes is the last opportunity to get *everyone* of significance together at one time
  - Encourages storytelling and reminiscing
  - Provides a social support system
  - Is a very important part of the grieving process
  - Prompts survivors to search for their own interpretation of life and death
  - Offers continuity and hope for the living
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