

pain connection

helping people with chronic pain and their families

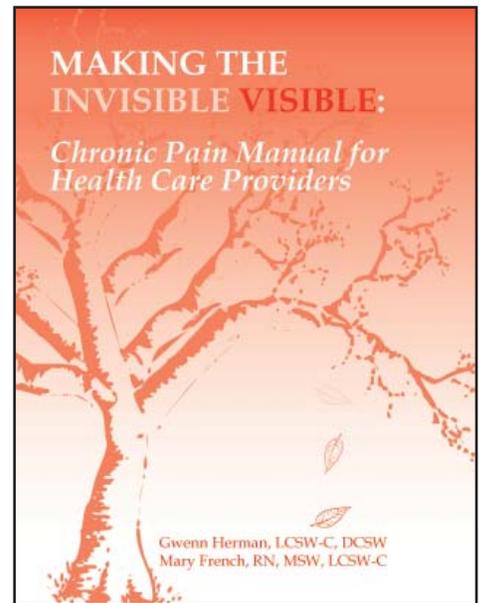
IMPORTANT PUBLICATION NOW AVAILABLE: Manual Addresses the Needs of Chronic Pain Patients

Pain Connection is pleased to announce the publication of its comprehensive manual for health care providers and others interested in learning more about the realities of chronic pain. *Making the Invisible Visible: A Chronic Pain Manual for Health Care Providers* is a timely and unique publication that contains up-to-date information on chronic pain, exercises and handouts for developing coping skills and strategies, and insights and experiences of chronic pain sufferers and their families.

Written by Gwenn Herman and Mary French, who each have more than 25 years of experience as health providers and also live with chronic pain, the 262-page manual examines a wide range of topics including:

- Myths and misconceptions about chronic pain clients
- Psychosocial effects of chronic pain
- Pain Connection's Support Group Model
- Complementary and alternative treatments

Dr. Gary Kaplan, Founder and Medical Director of The Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine praise's the book as a thorough overview of therapeutic interventions for chronic pain. "Ms. Herman's and Ms. French's firsthand exposure to the difficulties of getting healthcare providers to properly recognize, diagnose and treat chronic pain makes this an excellent resource for both professionals and patients." He further



states that readers "are sure to be exposed to important facts and treatment modalities that they have not encountered before."

The book is available for \$49.95, plus \$7.95 shipping and handling fees. To order, go to www.painconnection.org or call 301-231-0008.

New Groups! New Projects! New Office! New Website! Same Wonderful Support!!!

"Good experience to meet other people; I wish I had gone sooner. It enriches my life because I am less depressed and hopeless. I can call twenty people when I am sad. It has helped me to relax."

Susan, group member

Pain Connection sponsors free monthly support groups in Maryland and Virginia. Groups are led by clinicians

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Upcoming Meetings

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Davis Library

6400 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda 1st

Thursdays 1:30–3:00 p.m.

Moving in January to new office at 12320 Parklawn Drive, 2nd floor, Large conference room, Rockville

Thursdays 1:30–3:00 p.m.

Germantown Community Center

18905 Kingsview Road

2nd Thursdays, 12:00–1:30 p.m.

Gaithersburg Chinese Speaking Group

16220 Frederick Road, Suite 502,

3rd Wednesdays, 7:00–8:00 p.m.

Silver Spring Spanish Speaking Group (Grupo de Apoyo Para Personas con Dolores Cronicos de Silver Spring)

THR Mental Health Clinic, 1011

University Blvd. East, Suite 101

4th Mondays (el cuarto lunes de cada mes), 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Gentle Movement Classes

Washington Grove Methodist Church,

303 Chestnut Ave, Washington Grove

2nd Wednesdays, 2:00–3:30 p.m.

Bethesda Biofeedback Classes

Moving in December to 7920 Norfolk

Avenue, Suite 200D, Bethesda

Reservation is required.

3rd Mondays, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

PRINCE GEORGES' COUNTY

Rexford Place

9885 Greenbelt Road, Lanham

2nd Wednesdays, 1:30–3:00 p.m.

HOWARD COUNTY

The Wellness Center

Medical Pavillion, Howard County

General Hospital, Suite 100, 10710

Charter Drive, Columbia

3rd Mondays, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

TOWSON/BALTIMORE

Bykota Senior Center, 611 Central Avenue, Towson

3rd Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

VIRGINIA

Moving in December to 207 Park

Avenue, Suite B-3, Falls Church

2nd Wednesdays, 1:30–3:00 p.m.



Montgomery County Support Group: Dealing with holidays.

Photo by Seraphina Lin/Medill News

with a dual mission of providing support and useful skills to people with chronic pain and their families and caregivers, as well as to interested community members. Patients are encouraged to bring ice packs, pillows, or anything else to promote comfort during the session.

Different modalities are used in the support groups to foster coping skills, decision making, assertiveness and relaxation techniques. These include meditation, guided imagery, breathing exercises, biofeedback and role playing.

Please call Pain Connection at 301-231-0008 or go to www.painconnection.org for specific dates and directions.

Speaker's Series

In addition to the support groups, Pain Connection offers a Guest Speaker Series from 1:30–3:00 p.m. at the Holiday Park Senior Center, 3950 Ferrara Drive, Wheaton MD, on select Mondays.

November 23: Malcolm Herman, Attorney, "Ask the Lawyer—Questions about Pain and The Law".

WE'RE NOT INVISIBLE ANY MORE!!! Pain Connection has a new home!

After 10 years of providing support to people with chronic pain and their families, Pain Connection is proud to announce that it has a new office at The Nonprofit Village, 12320 Parklawn Drive, Rockville, MD, Room 210. Our new telephone is 301-231-0008 and fax number is 301-231-6668.

A Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony officially opened the office on Friday, September 11, 2009. Guests of honor were Secretary of State John McDonough and Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett, both of whom presented Pain Connection with proclamations proclaiming 'September as Pain Awareness Month.' A special thank you to the local businesses that provided donations for the event: Starbucks, Mykonos Grill, Lebanese Taverna, LaMadeline's, Party City and Dunkin' Donuts.

September is Proclaimed as Pain Awareness Month in Maryland

Pain Connection joined with the American Pain Foundation to promote September as Pain Awareness Month. To commemorate this occasion, Pain Connection received proclamations from Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett and Howard County Executive Ken Ulma expressing the need for pain care to all residents. Below is the proclamation from the Governor of Maryland:

WHEREAS, Pain Connection-Chronic Pain Outreach Center, Inc., provides monthly support groups to chronic pain sufferers and their families in Montgomery, Prince George's, Baltimore and Howard Counties, a Speakers Series, copies of "Making the Invisible Visible: Chronic Pain Manual for Health Care Providers," training of health care professionals, information, referrals, community outreach and education, a newsletter and website. These services will improve the quality of life, offer a chance for rehabilitation, decrease the sense of isolation and alienation this population experiences; and

WHEREAS, Pain Connection has joined with the American Pain Foundation's advocacy program, Power Over Pain, to raise awareness about the persisting barriers preventing those living with pain from getting the help they desperately need and to take action to break down these obstacles; and

WHEREAS, Pain touches each one of us at one time or another. Pain can begin for many different reasons. Pain affects every aspect of a person's life —physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being; and

WHEREAS, Pain is one of our nation's most serious health problems. An estimated 76.5 million Americans live with chronic pain caused by various diseases or disorders; and

WHEREAS, Maryland joins in supporting increased awareness and understanding of the treatment of pain.

Now, therefore, I, MARTIN O'MALLEY, Governor of the State of Maryland, do hereby proclaim September, 2009 as pain awareness month in Maryland, and call upon the people of our state to join in supporting this observance.

The new location provides Pain Connection with a greater community presence, more networking opportunities, and a space for volunteers and to hold meetings and trainings. The Board of Directors for Pain Connection would like to thank all the donors, volunteers, and participants who have supported the organization from its earliest days when there was only one support group to a full-fledged non-profit organization offering resources and a variety of services in Maryland and Virginia.

Pain Connection's Board President Receives Award

Mary French, RN, MSW, LCSW-C is the 2009 recipient of The Power of Pain Foundation's 2009 McDowell Pain Advocacy Award in recognition of her outstanding work and advocacy for pain



Left to right: Malcolm Herman, Pain Connection Board Member; Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett; Micke Brown, American Pain Foundation; Gwenn Herman, Pain Connection Founder and Executive Director; Mary French, Pain Connection Board President; Maryland Secretary of State John McDonough.

Holiday Season Membership

We Need You! Chronic pain is still a new and developing field in medicine and mental health.

We Need You! There still is not enough awareness by the public to try and solve this debilitating problem.

We Need You! Chronic pain is not pressing on the minds of government, foundations and private donors.

We Need You! In order to support and further develop out programs.

Take a Stand! Help solve this pressing problem, become a member and grow with us!

Join Pain Connection Today!!!

Your payment of a \$40.00 annual membership fee may be made in the following ways:

- Credit card on-line through our secure server.
- Check mailed to Pain Connection with completed application form.
- Fax your completed application and credit card information to 301-231-6668.
- Through Network For Good which is a secure service. Please also send in an application form for our records.

Your membership benefits include:

- DISCOUNTS of up to 25% with local wellness providers
- Monthly notices of support group meetings and the Professional Speaker Series by mail, email and/or phone call
- Chronic Pain resources
- Pain Connection's newsletter
- Contact information for your local support leader (on request)
- Health care practitioner referral list for your geographic area (on request)

patients. The award was presented to Mary on September 12th at the 3rd Annual Comic Pain Relief held at George Mason University Center for the Arts in Fairfax, Virginia. Barby Ingle, Executive Director, said, "The motivation and drive you offer pain patients helps to keep others on track with goals and positivity as they deal with chronic pain issues."

In addition to being on the Pain Connection Board, Mary French is the American Pain Foundation's Power Over Pain Action Network Leader in Maryland. As a health professional with more than 25 years experience, she operates a private psychotherapy practice in Baltimore and Howard County specializing in trauma and chronic pain. Mary is a member of the American Nurses Association, the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland State Emergency Volunteer, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Teacher and a Certified EMDR Instructor. She is a frequent speaker and is the co-author of *Making the Invisible Visible: A Chronic Pain Manual for Health Care Providers*.

Community Outreach, Education and Training

Pain Connection is active in the community providing speakers to state and local government agencies, such as the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, to professional associations (e.g., National Association of Social Workers), and to local churches and senior centers.

Pain Connection held its Annual Training Conference on May 16th at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, MD. Entitled "Chronic Pain and Your Practice: Making the Invisible Visible", 30 health care professionals attended the event. Dr. Gary Kaplan, D.O., Medical Director of the Kaplan Clinic for Inte-

grative Medicine, gave the keynote address: Treating Depression and Chronic Pain. Other presentations covered the latest research; myths and misconceptions about chronic pain; mind/body approaches; mindfulness-based stress reduction; the six psychosocial stages of chronic pain; and relapse prevention and the treatment tree. Demonstrations included guided imagery and gentle movement techniques.

Advocacy News

Power Over Pain Action Network

Pain Connection has joined the American Pain Foundation in a collaborative effort to advocate for a national pain policy, appropriate pain care and public awareness in the Power Over Pain Action Network. Contact www.painfoundation.org and 410-783-7292.

Pain Connection is a member of the Advisory Committee to develop a Prescription Monitoring Program for Maryland. Testimonies have also been given at Federal Drug Administration hearings.

Power Over Pain Commemorative Stamp Petition

Please join the American Pain Foundation and Pain Connection in petitioning the Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee to create a Power Over Pain Commemorative Stamp.

Public awareness is needed to address this issue, an invisible health care crisis. Awareness and education can help millions who now suffer silently in pain by removing barriers to care. Please take a minute to help all those in pain today.

Read the full proposal and sign the petition at www.pain-connection.org/php-PETITION/popstamp.php.

United Way

Designate Pain Connection to receive your donation through the United Way of the National Capital Area at your place of work. Remember when you receive your donor card to write in Pain Connection's designation number 8695. Our "NEW" United Way Combined Federal Campaign Designation Number is #62705. Please designate Pain Connection on your donor card at work or when making a donation! Also, tell your co-workers, family, friends and neighbors.

News Updates

Healthcare Initiative Foundation Grant

Pain Connection received a \$33,750 grant from the Healthcare Initiative Foundation to assist in its mission to meet the unique psychosocial needs of people with chronic pain and their families in Montgomery County. This grant provided funding to produce the training manual, *Making the Invisible Visible: Chronic Pain Manual for Health Care Providers* and to increase education and outreach in the community. Five new groups funded were: Germantown support group, Gentle Movement, Bio-feedback Chinese and Spanish Speaking Health Information Presentations.

The Healthcare Initiative Foundation is a nonprofit, grant-making trust that supports organizations offering solutions for improving the quality and delivery of health care for residents of Montgomery County, Maryland. We thank Karen Green, Executive Director, and board members for believing in our efforts.

Yogathon benefits Pain Connection

Pain Connection held a Yogathon fundraiser, April 26th at THRIVE YOGA in Rockville, Maryland. The event featured three yoga classes; Very Gentle Yoga led

by Kim Thompson, Laughter Yoga led by Nira Berry and Beginners Yoga taught by Thrive Yoga. Thanks to all our teachers and participants for your support.

Contributions of \$100 and over

Susan Perry Thomas, Susan Gordon, Geoff Manifold, Lee Blank, Nancy Magnusson

YOU CAN MAKE A HOLIDAY DONATION ONLINE ! GIVE YOUR LOVED ONE A MEMBERSHIP!

Go to our Donation Page. Click on either the "Network For Good" logo, a secure service, or donate directly on the Membership Page.

Thank you volunteers!

Jeannie Broadwell, Lee Blank, French Family, Amy Brush, Nancy Magnusson, Ivymount School, Silber Family, Ellen Moran, Sharon Hellman, Herman Family, Sarah Jankovsky, Diana Ehlers, Elise Couloumbis, Patti Smith, Neil Goldstein, Ellen Weiss

Members' Forum

Pain Connection welcomes articles, poems, and drawings from members' and families to provide an insight into their lives

The Tree of My Life

by Dalia Isicoff
(Dalia has suffered from rheumatoid arthritis since age 3 and is a member of the Howard County support group)

I have now added "creativity" to my tool box for living with and managing chronic pain. Being creative and producing any type of artwork engages all of my senses. It is during the times that I spend being mindful of nature, objects of beauty, photos, colors, forms or textures that allow me to engage a secret part of my brain. This seems to override that other part or message center that is preoccupied with how to run away from the pain. It is as if "the war is over."



Dalia's "The Tree of My Life"

The Tree of My Life is a wall hanging sculpture by Dalia Isicoff created from clay in green and earth tones. A hand building technique was used to form the beads and the coils that form the top of the tree. The rim of the piece was formed by pressing a wood stick against the clay surface. A thin narrow piece of wood was run vertically to form the tree trunk. The five hanging bead strings represent Dalia's five hip replacement surgeries. The individual beads represent major flare-ups; high fevers, swelling of every joint and hospitalizations. As Dalia explains the trunk represents "my strength" with the canapé illustrating how much I have blossomed in spite of the trauma." Dalia notes that creating this piece "... opened up a door for me to take the first step toward a compassionate self."

Liz's Story

By Susan Gordon

When my daughter, Liz, was fourteen she was riding her pony, Silver, at a show jumping competition. Silver, a white Arab-pony cross, loved to jump

anything in the woods, on the trail or out foxhunting. He would take any size coop or jump in stride, but the show ring was another matter. Silver was cantering around the ring, coming into a jump, when he suddenly dropped his head and skidded to a stop in front of a simple three-pole fence. Although Liz was a strong, bold rider, she was jerked out of the saddle, went over her pony's head and brought down the jump with her back. She was taken away from the ring, strapped down on a board, in an ambulance.

This accident began Liz's long relationship with severe pain. The years that followed involved great physical distress, buoyancy of spirit, and perseverance.

This is a story of the struggle to find the right treatments, effective pain management, and respect from the medical community. It is the story of how we all missed critical symptoms because we assumed Liz's pain only had a single cause. It is also the story of coming to know that there can be other ways of managing chronic pain.

Her Dad and I took her to one doctor after another. Most of them let her down. I remember a neurosurgeon who worked on the Washington Redskins players. He kept minimizing Liz's pain. He said he couldn't find any reason for it. But later, he took needles and went in through the nerves around her spine, trying to deaden it. Lizzy never forgot the pain of that procedure.

Throughout high school Liz used marijuana, alcohol and occasionally LSD. She finally settled on pot and alcohol to escape from the pain. Liz was called by one friend, "a force of nature." She was known for her ability "to look you in the eye and tell you what you needed to know, whether you wanted to hear it or not." It was this tough, outspoken girl, who, at age 19, was found by her employer, crying in the back office of his veterinary clinic. He asked, "What's

wrong, Lizzy?" She said, "My back hurts so bad and I just can't get away from the pain." The veterinarian said, "Her words haunted me. She was only 19 and it felt like she was being pursued by pain."

Liz took seven years to graduate from the Park Management program at Frederick Community College. She completed her AA degree in June of 1998. Her dad and I helped her search out a school that taught experientially and in August, at the age of 25, she headed off to Evergreen State in Olympia Washington, where she completed her BS in environmental science in two years. She had found what she loved to do.

On January 28, 1999, I turned into my driveway and saw two white police SUVs. They followed me up the lane. In the kitchen, they told me that my husband, Ralph, had dropped dead of a sudden heart attack, while entering a second floor elevator at the BWI airport parking lot. Liz and her sister, Miriam, adored their Dad and his death undid them. But Liz knew her Dad's dreams for her and she returned to school and plunged back into her studies.

Liz continued to play and work hard, studying stream management. In the spring of 2000, she took the most exciting trip of her life, traveling in a wooden dory down 300 miles of Colorado River rapids. In June, she graduated from Evergreen State, wishing her Dad could see her. She remained in the west and found jobs doing stream management. But the jobs were all grant funded, none had health insurance, which she needed to treat her increasing pain.

Finally Liz returned to Maryland where she found a job as a veterinary technician at a Potomac veterinary clinic. They offered health benefits. Liz was working full time and running a critter sitter business on the side, desperately trying to make ends meet. She loved her job and excelled, but continued to re-injure

her back managing an active practice which included lifting heavy dogs.

She saw a chiropractor, massage therapist, and acupuncturist trying to cope with the pain. Her internist, Dr. C, over prescribed pain medications to a drug-seeking Liz; she became addicted to them. I called the doctor and told her, "If you ever prescribe for Liz again, I'll sue you." Liz had been pursuing back surgery, and had a laminectomy in June of 2005. The hospital was appalled by the regimen of pills Liz was taking. Two months after the surgery, Liz and I traveled to Montgomery General Hospital for help in detoxing from the pain medications. They took six hours to admit her to the ER, six hours that I sat with Liz's head in my lap as she shivered and shook.

Once Liz was off the medications, she returned to alternative therapies, but the pain had returned and was increasing. The back surgery had failed. We began seeking out pain management centers in Montgomery County. The doctor at a recommended clinic, **Dr. S, said "You are nothing but an addict. I could lose my license treating someone like you."** Liz had admitted her use of alcohol and marijuana to him and he could have used this as a teaching moment; instead he was nasty and inhumane. He said, "I'll prescribe methadone or morphine for you, but only if you submit to random drug and alcohol screens, and you better pass them, but I'm betting you are such an addict, you won't." I went into the doctor's office with her for this last appointment and heard the tone of voice with which he addressed her. She left in tears; I was so undone I couldn't even think of a reply. Later in the afternoon I called him and said, "I work with addicts every day and I have never seen the need to treat any one of them the way you treated my daughter." Liz tried two other pain management clinics in Montgomery County. She had multiple spinal

injections, was re-prescribed Percocets initially, then Percocets and morphine.

In June of 2007, I attended a Pain Connection seminar, seeking other ways to help Liz handle the chronic pain. There I met a licensed clinical social worker, who is also in chronic pain. I began to understand that managing pain needs to be a holistic enterprise. **While a person may be prescribed and need pain medications, there is a difference between dependency and abuse. One can be dependent on medications without abusing them.** This is a distinction that substance abuse counselors, like me, aren't taught. I learned there were support groups Liz could attend, with other people who had a profound understanding of the pain she was enduring, because they were experiencing it themselves. I learned there were 12 Step Meetings for people who used medications, that there were meditation groups, and an array of doctors who were informed of and employed the full range of complementary therapies along with prescribing appropriate medications.

I came home and tried to describe all I learned to Liz, who was a little wary of making changes her Mom was enthusiastic about. Liz was focused on a second planned back surgery, this time at Johns Hopkins. She was open with me about the medications she was taking; she knew she was drug dependent. She told her cousin, her friends and me, "I will have to go inpatient to detox off these meds."

The second week of August 2007, Liz was in the emergency room on Wednesday for excruciating pain, at the pain management clinic on Thursday, where her medications were changed. She described her symptoms in both places. When I talked to Liz on Thursday, she said she had been taken off of morphine, started on methadone, was still prescribed Percocets and valium had been added to the mix for the unrelenting

back spasms. Liz said, "Mom, I'm all messed up and I still hurt." On Friday, Liz returned to work and began a critter-sitting job in Rockville. I called to see if she wanted me to come down. She said, "No, Mom, I'll be alright."

On Saturday, August 11, 2007, at the age of 34, Liz was found dead. She was curled up on a couch, a pillow beneath her head and a blanket pulled up over her. The pills she was prescribed for pain were on the table next to her. Her dogs, River and Cosmo, were frantic. They were barking and growling, dancing between Liz and the police who had been called, trying to keep them away from her body.

Liz's friends and I thought Liz had died from an accidental overdose of the pain medications that had just been changed that week. Two weeks later, the medical examiner called me and said "All the medications your daughter was taking were at a therapeutic level. But she was 85% occluded in her left descending artery and died from a sudden heart attack." That's when I learned that Liz had a heart condition, which could have been easily repaired, but had gone undiagnosed.

Liz's death is an unfathomable grief and mystery to me. I know the pain she was suffering has ended and for that I am grateful, but I didn't want to lose her as she let go of that agony.

There were signals we all missed. Following her Dad's death, Liz had high blood pressure and high cholesterol. She was treated with medications and told to stop smoking and lose weight. With the medications and eventual weight loss, her symptoms disappeared and Liz, her cardiologist, and I thought that they were a stress reaction in response to her father's death. She didn't continue to see the cardiologist and I ignored nagging concerns that she should. When Liz's back pain increased in her late twenties

and early thirties, her doctors and I were so focused on it that we didn't think about her Dad dying, at 53, of a sudden heart attack; we didn't think it was possible to lose someone as young as Liz from the same disease.

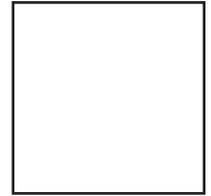
After learning the cause of her death, a veterinarian, who had been a friend to Liz in addition to being her employer, was distraught because Liz had told him the pain she was experiencing was up by her shoulder blades. Everyone with whom she worked was so aware of the constant back pain that no one remembered that upper back pain is often heart related.

Eight months after Liz's death, I was going through her backpack and found the name of her doctor and address of her pain management clinic. Finding the address spurred me to action. I wrote to her pain management doctor and to Dr. C, her internist, and said, **"If you have clients on pain medications, make sure, as a matter of course, that patients are checked for heart problems and other health problems that can present as pain."** The pain management doctor called me immediately, and then sent a follow-up letter, saying that he would institute these changes. The general internist never responded to my letter or subsequent calls.

One of Liz's doctors heeded a warning and another didn't acknowledge it. I hope those of you who know Liz's pain because you are experiencing it, will recognize an opportunity to have yourselves thoroughly checked. I hope you will avail yourselves of the services of The Pain Connection, use pain medications when needed, but also educate yourselves about a range of ways that pain can be managed through alternative therapies and explore them. And to those of you who treat clients in chronic pain, I hope that you will treat them as whole persons who may not always make the best decisions about managing



PAIN CONNECTION®
CHRONIC PAIN OUTREACH CENTER, INC.
12320 Parklawn Drive
Suite 210
Rockville, MD 20852



their pain. I hope you will be human and humane. I hope that you will refer your clients for heart and cancer testing.

When Liz died a great unbounded spirit was lost, my beloved wild child disappeared from sight. Because Liz was a truth teller she would want you to know as much of the truth of her life as I can tell you. Yes, she used legal and illegal substances to mask the pain. She is not alone. Yes, she became addicted to her pain medications. She is not alone. Despite her pain, she lived a full life, grabbed every experience and wrung joy from it. I wish the same for each of us.

Susan Gordon
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There are 76 million Americans suffering from chronic pain who are not receiving the treatment they need. Many fall between the cracks in their own private health insurance, workman's compensation, and disability benefits. Others are helpless because of a lack of insurance.

Pain Connection® is a 501(c)(3) not for profit human health service agency that provides monthly support groups, training, supervision, information and referrals, community outreach and education, website and newsletter. Pain Connection plans to establish an outreach center which will provide counseling, support groups and seminars, 24 hour hotline, library with Internet access, training program, case management, advocacy, and transportation for people suffering from chronic pain. These services will improve the quality of life, offer a chance for rehabilitation, decrease the sense of isolation this population experiences and enable the chronic pain sufferer to take control of his/her condition and treatment and maintain independence.

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