



## Steve Jacobsen: Phone Calls After the Jesusita Fire

### Hospice of Santa Barbara was there, is there for those who need our help

Once the Jesusita Fire was contained, [Hospice of Santa Barbara](#) saw a dramatic increase in the number of phone calls inquiring about our services. Calls came from people of all ages. From students referred from [SBCC](#) and [UCSB](#). From nurses at [Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital](#) making sure we would be here for the people they were seeing. Calls came from former clients who needed to find us again. From people who had never called us before, but heard they could trust us and now were reaching out for our help.

#### **OPEN ARMS**

*Coping with loss,  
embracing healing*



**Steve Jacobsen**

Executive Director of  
Hospice of Santa Barbara

[www.hospiceofsantabarbara.org](http://www.hospiceofsantabarbara.org)

These calls were not about the loss of a loved one in the fire itself — as we know, one of the amazing facts about this fire was that no lives were lost, despite its sudden power and speed on the night of May 7. Calls kept coming because the shock of the fire and its destructive power stirred up visceral reminders of how people we love can be lost in an instant. They kept coming because once again we are reminded that, despite all of our wonderful technological devices, there are powers of nature that are beyond our control. We are reminded life is fragile and fleeting and precious. We feel a need to talk to someone. We need to talk to someone who can

listen with love and skill. We need someone who will not be afraid to listen to descriptions of our pain and help us find the meaning of our stories as they unfold. We need to find someone who wants to hear about the hollow places within us that suddenly expand in ways that make us gasp. We need to find someone to journey with us as we go through periods of spiritual vertigo.

Out of these needs, the calls came. And they came to the right place. With a vision of healing the loneliness of grief and the fear of death, we're here to be that skillful, caring hand that people are reaching for, that understanding voice people are yearning to hear. As executive director of Hospice of Santa Barbara, I am deeply grateful to see the work we do and the way we do it.

At the same time, it's my job to let the community know our needs. Our counseling staff consists of licensed professionals, two who work for Hospice of Santa Barbara full time, one half time, and six who work part time, filling in when possible. The increase in demand for our services has exceeded our capacity to meet these needs promptly, resulting in a growing waiting list for our services. This is a concern for us all.

It's also my job to be looking to the future. Dramatic public events will continue to happen, and calls to our office will increase whenever they do. Regardless of such events, the need for our services will never go away. Every day our phone rings with someone seeking help, and every day we seek to do all we can to meet each need. As we do so, we never charge for our services. We receive no support from any government agencies or receive any reimbursement from any kind of insurance. We depend solely on the support of our community. In a constricting economy, the support of people who understand the value of what we do is more important than ever.

Please support us so people don't have to wait to receive our services. Please support us so we can keep answering the phones. Please support us as we continue to provide "compassionate care, freely given."

— *Steve Jacobsen is executive director of [Hospice of Santa Barbara](#). Call Hospice of Santa Barbara at 805.563.8820 for a schedule of adult and children's groups, or to make a donation.*