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## Crisis Center has Strong Lamorinda Ties

Cathy Dausman



Volunteer Jim Holt (left) joins Contra Costa Crisis Center Executive Director John Bateson. Photo Cathy Dausman

considered becoming a grief counselor. Counselor-trainees must pass an initial health screening evaluation, and then undergo 25 to 30 hours of training over seven weeks.

Holt's personal ties with CCCC is one reason he is co-chairing a new CCCC event—a benefit walkathon on May 14 at Heather Farm Park. The walkathon falls on the weekend his step-daughter graduates from Duke University, and Holt knows he can't make both events. He's committed to be in Walnut Creek for the walkathon. "I'll probably write her [stepdaughter] a letter for someone to read aloud," he says, adding his letter may end up being better than any speech he would give in person.

Bateson says the walkathon is a nice counterpoint to the center's formal gala fundraiser in the fall. The nonprofit center's 250 volunteers and staff of 22 handled more than 63,000 calls in 2010. It has an annual operating budget of 1.8 million, and relies heavily on grants and donations plus income from sales at its Leftovers Thrift Shop.

"With help comes hope," says the Crisis Center mission statement. And Jim Holt knows he can help.

For more information about the Crisis Center, go to [www.crisis-center.org](http://www.crisis-center.org).

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Crisis: "an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life."—Merriam Webster online. Jim Holt and John Bateson are more specific: in their work for the Contra Costa Crisis Center, they may encounter homelessness, victims of child or elder abuse, suicide attempts, school-based youth violence (bullying or cyber-bullying, for example) and relatives who have lost a loved one. Both call Moraga home—Holt for 10 years, Bateson for 16. Bateson is Executive Director for the forty eight year old organization; Holt a volunteer who's been on both sides of the counseling table.

Holt first volunteered for the Crisis Center in 2005. He answered the 24 hour crisis lines for a year before switching to volunteer work for the Red Cross. When his son Ryan, 20, died in a motorcycle accident in 2007 Holt returned to the crisis center as a participant in their grief support group and stayed with the grief group "for a couple years." It was a difficult time both for Holt and Moraga; Ryan Holt's death was the town's third motor vehicle fatality involving young adults in less than five months.

The senior Holt also underwent private grief counseling through his medical provider but feels he benefited most from the weekly group grief counseling sessions CCCC provided. "My heart is with the Crisis Center," he says, stressing the value of peer support which comes from those who have also suffered the death of a loved one. "Only they know what it is like." Holt works as an insurance broker but has