



▲ Debbie Hilton **Kamm** and Karin **Yospe**
Difficult circumstances brought Karin Yospe and Debbie Hilton

Kamm together and inspired them to help others. About six years ago, both women gave birth to children with congenital heart defects. Yospe's daughter was born with a heart that is backwards and on the wrong side of her chest. Kamm's son was born with half a heart, requiring three open-heart surgeries before the age of two. In between doctors' appointments and open heart surgeries they met through an online support group and realized that not only did they both live in California, they both lived in Irvine's Woodbridge community.

"We searched for any local support for families and there wasn't any," Kamm said. "We started **California Heart Connection** in 2001 to provide support for families and received non-profit status in 2002." It is the only non-profit support network of its kind in the state.

Today the organization, run solely by Kamm and Yospe, has helped more than 500 families. It offers online support for parents, information about events, and important resources. The organization also provides patient materials to pediatric cardiologists and teddy bears to children undergoing heart surgery. Recently, the organization received a \$10,000 grant from **Edwards Lifesciences** to provide a seminar about future treatments and issues impacting children with congenital heart defects.