

The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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The F-M Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
127 2ND AVE E
WEST FARGO, ND

Please enter on the West side. Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side.

**Meeting Topic -
Candlelighting Ceremony**

Upcoming Meetings
December 11th
January 8th

Dates to Remember

Worldwide Candle Lighting® -
7 p.m. December 14th

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on
December 18th @ Fry'n Pan
TCF National Conference - Dallas,
TX July 10-12, 2015

TCF Regional Conference -
Rochester, MN October 2-4, 2015

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children' (www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html). If you would like your child's picture and a poem or story posted on this page, please submit them to us at tcf1313@hotmail.com or mail them to our PO Box (listed on the back of the newsletter). Photos and poems/stories sent to the PO Box will be electronically scanned and then returned to you so please remember to include a return address.

We quickly find there are no words to describe the experience of losing a child. For those who have not lost a child, no explanation will do. For those who have, no explanation is necessary.

~ Mary Lingle

OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. ©2007

LOVE GIFTS

Lyle, Tammy, Justin, Stacy, Hunter, Jersey, Jamie & Jordyn Helgeson in memory of their son/bother, Jared Scott Helgeson

Dean & Jo Allmendinger in memory of their son, Luke Allmendinger

Pat & Denny Wateland in memory of their daughter, Tracy Ann Wateland

Jim & Suzie Hill in memory of their son, Jonathan Poitra

Lynn & Donna Mickelson in memory of their grandchild, Unborn Baby Deutscher

Scott & Ruth Blilie in memory of their daughter, Nicole Anne Blilie

Ernie & Birdine Grafsgaard in memory of their son, David Grafsgaard

We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month.

Our chapter and all chapters, are financed solely through your Love Gifts.

Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible.

Thank you for your tax deductible gifts.

The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all children who have died

Worldwide Candle Lighting®
... that their light may always shine.

Sunday, December 14, 2014
7 PM Around the Globe

Worldwide Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white
Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night
All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?
Oh, Angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above
Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow
We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
As.....we remember.

~ Jacqueline Brown, TCF/New Berlin, PA

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

When snowflakes dance on winter winds
And colored lights shine Christmas cheer,
When children's laughter fill the air
And Family gathers from far and near,
I try to celebrate with them
And not let my hurting show.
But the empty space within my heart,
At this season, seems to grow
'Til often times it fills the days,
And many nighttime's too,
With aching thoughts and memories
Of Christmases I spent with you.
Yes, memories do hurt, its true
But I have this feeling, too
I'm so glad I hold these memories,
For with the I hold part of you.
So for now I wipe away the tears
And join with loved ones dear
To celebrate this Christmas time,
For I know that, in my heart...you're here.

~Arden Lansing, TCF/Monmouth County, NJ

How Many Stockings Shall I Hang?

What a torment! Funny how you worry what your friends
will think. For days I worried... And finally I hung three upon
the fireplace wall, and laid one gently on the mantel.

But that was last year! And this year I shall hang all four
above the fireplace. For this year the confusion of the mind has
found new answers - with conviction! For it does not really
matter whether my oldest daughter lives in Tucson, or my
youngest son David is dead - these are my children - our family
- and as long as we hang the Christmas stockings, we shall hang
them all...with Love.

~ Shirley Melin, TCF/Aurora, IL

A Special Wish for You this Holiday Season.

We wish you UNDERSTANDING, ASSURANCE,
ENDURANCE, AND PATIENCE (with yourself and your
loved ones).

We wish you the inner resources to SURVIVE,
STRENGTH to make it through one more day.

We wish you the ability to COMMUNICATE,
CONCENTRATE, EXPRESS YOUR GRIEF, CRY AND
COPE.

And with these wishes we offer HOPE - that your tears will
be healing and become gentler in time.

May the season be a remembrance of LOVE and JOY and
of special times shared.

For the New Year, we wish you COMFORT and PEACE.

~ Val Mason, TCF/Pocatello, ID

'Twas the Night Before Christmas

(For Bereaved Parents)

'Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,
That I knew I was facing - the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.
As others were making their holiday plans,
My heart was breaking - I couldn't understand.
I had lost my dear child a few years before,
And I knew what my holiday had in store.
When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet and was looking around,
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash
The sight that I saw took my breath away,
And my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a cluster of butterflies fluttering near.
With beauty and grace they performed a dance,
I knew in a moment this wasn't by chance.
The hope that they gave me was a sign from above,
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.
The message they brought was my holiday gift,
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.
As I knelt closer to get a better view,
One allowed me to pet it - as if it knew -
That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,
To help me get through the holiday scene.
In the days that followed I carried the thought,
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart -
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us - they're not really dead.
Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ears,
A message of hope - a message so dear.
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight,
"To all bereaved parents - We love you, goodnight!"

~ Faye McCord, TCF/ Jackson, MS

"Giving yourself time to heal and creating space for the process
allows the painful memories to be replaced gradually by more
pleasant ones. When the pain subsides, one remembers the
whole relationship not the most recent memories of illness,
accidents and death. Eventually we need to make peace with
that which will never be resolved."

~ Anne Brenner

THE GRIEF OF MENTAL ILLNESS

I know now that my daughter, Laurie was mentally ill. I did not understand the meaning of this 20 years ago when her depression and "strange" behavior preceded a suicide attempt while in college. Despite all the help we could get for her, she succeeded in completing suicide five years later, at the age of 25, in 1980.

Her psychiatrist then agreed to talk to me -- he said, with tears in his eyes, she had been a serious schizophrenic patient. For reasons of patient confidentiality, I was not privy to this information earlier. WHY couldn't I have learned about this before it was too late?

The grief I felt as a bereaved parent was compounded by the truth of her illness. There is a stigma with mental illness. Society has been slow to understand and to accept mental illness. There is grief with mental illness -- for the loss of the child that we wanted to be normal. Why did this have to happen to my child?

Was this my fault? Guilt rears its ugly head. Why didn't I see the early signs that she needed help? I felt anger -- wanting to blame others for what happened. I was frustrated -- with the professionals who could not/did not "fix it." I was disillusioned with the public and private mental health system and its limited resources for the mentally ill and their families. Laurie fell between the cracks and is gone.

Thirteen years later I have come to terms with her suicide. I know now there are many reasons for mental illness, most of which are beyond my control. Mental illness is a disease. It can be the result of genetics, a chemical imbalance in the brain, or a nutritional deficiency/allergy -- NOT bad parenting.

I have learned that in grief and in loss, most people want to/need to "talk about it." The magic of sharing feelings and experiences with others who understand (because they've been there), is a healing process. For me, The Compassionate Friends, a national peer-support organization for bereaved parents and siblings, has provided this outlet on a local and national level. I have also participated in a local chapter of The Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and have learned so much more about mental illness through sharing with others who are coping with this stigma and grief. The National Alliance for Mentally Ill slogan in 1991 was "the most shocking thing about mental illness is how little people understand it." How true! How sad!

After Laurie's suicide, initially the most therapeutic healing for me was to publish a book of her writings, material I found expressing her thoughts, visions and frustrations from the ages of 15 to 25. This actual documentation of a mentally ill young person is poetic, loving, humorous, depressing and spiritual. Perhaps her words will help others to see and understand this disease. Her words express intuitive insights in a most articulate way, despite the message of helplessness and hopelessness. As a bereaved parent I felt a strong motivation to perpetuate the memory of Laurie in a positive way.

Public education, and acceptance of mental illness as a disease is helping to change attitudes. We are learning to be more open and honest about it. We are learning to cope and go on with our lives.

Maybe it was the mother in me, but I never thought I would lose her. Now through the grief and later understanding of this disease, I have found a new purpose in my life. Reaching out to help others caught in the quagmire of grief from mental illness, from suicide, from the death of a child, through support groups and writings, in turn has been a healing process for me too. I know that Laurie's 25 years on this earth have made a difference.

~ Carol Katz, TCF/Regional Coordinator, MA

Chanukah and Christmas

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them. But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light. In a society, which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

~ Dennis Klass, TCF/ St. Louis, MO

SORROW IS NOT FOREVER—LOVE IS

So often one attempts to face the whole future at once. But we will not live that period all at once, only day by day. Don't try to face 20 years. Face today. When that has been achieved, face tomorrow. You will find more and more ways in which you can cope. The Chinese have a saying that a journey of a 1000 miles starts with a single step. There is no way you can take the 15th or the 200th step before you have taken the first.

It can be difficult to face going out again and resuming your regular activities. It can take more courage to face little things than the big things in life. Going out shopping for groceries for the first time can become an ordeal. Making the change more complete could help. Try a different store, a different day or time, and go with a friend. When it seems very hard what to decide to do first, maybe it's not very important where you start as long as you start. Choose a simple task and get started.

Once you've begun it will be far easier to set your priorities and you will have gained confidence for already having achieved something.

--The Facts of Death by Michael A. Simpson

RIVER OF TEARS

Four years gone, my tears still flow
making a river who's rapids I know.
Tossing my heart with grief, sorrow, regret
looking to heaven my heart won't forget

those Tears
of Joy
of Pride
of Loss

Crystal Rivulets are prayers, they
strengthen the bridge
To the Gate of eternity on God's
Heavenly Ridge

~ Rose Cote, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

LIGHT A CANDLE

Light a quiet candle,
Send a quiet kiss,
Say a quiet fare-thee well,
To the one you miss
Light a quiet candle,
Shed a quiet tear,
Sing a quiet lullaby,
and the quiet Christmas star will hear.

~ Sascha Wagner, TCF/Des Moines, IA

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

| CHILD | | PARENTS |
|-----------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| CORY LYNN AMUNDSON..... | 45 | JIM & CAROL SHERIDAN |
| NICOLE ANNE BLILIE..... | 25 | SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE |
| STEVEN DUANE COOK..... | 46 | SHARON COOK |
| SARA FRANCES GUNDERSON..... | 28 | JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN..... | 26 | DAVID HALLMAN |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN..... | 26 | LYNETTE MYROLD |
| GREGORY SEARS | 27 | LORI & JERRY BRADY |
| GREGORY SEARS | 27 | PERSYS PIERSALL (grandmother) |
| SCOTT WARNECKE..... | 46 | DOUG & JOAN WARNECKE |
| TRACY ANN WATELAND | 43 | DENNIS & PAT WATELAND |
| TRACY ANN WATELAND | 43 | SHARON WATELAND (godmother) |
| BRUCE ALLEN ZAESKE | 52 | ALAN & CHARLEEN ZAESKE |

ANNIVERSARIES

| CHILD | | PARENTS |
|--------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| CORY LYNN AMUNDSON..... | 8 | JIM & CAROL SHERIDAN |
| NICOLE ANNE BLILIE..... | 7 | SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE |
| KARI RAE BORGEN..... | 8 | JOHN & KELLY BORGEN |
| KIRSTIN ELIZABETH CANTLER-BOOKE..... | 5 | CHRIS & DAWN CANTLER (grandparents) |
| BRIAN W FOSS | 6 | ED & ELSIE FOSS |
| TYLER JAY FREED | 4 | RANDY & DEBBIE FREED |
| SARA FRANCES GUNDERSON..... | 2 | JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON |
| ASHLEY RAE HAINES..... | 3 | WILLIAM HAINES III |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN..... | 21 | DAVID HALLMAN |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN..... | 21 | LYNETTE MYROLD |
| NANCY DIANE HEST..... | 10 | RALPH & ETHEL HEST |
| TARA LEA KELLAR..... | 3 | CATHY & GREG GRONLAND |
| JODY ANN MAURER KNUDSON..... | 5 | JOHN & SHARON MAURER |
| JONATHAN LEVI POITRA | 4 | SUZIE & JAMES HILL |
| CHERYL L SAMSON..... | 3 | DUKE & PATRICIA SAMSON |

RECIPE FOR RECOVERY

As many of us go about preparing our Holiday dinners, don't we wish we had a "Recipe for Recovery?" "Just add a cup of boiling water, stir well and drink," and our grieving would be over. Our society seems to crave "instant answers," but bereavement is a long process, and there are no easy solutions. Yet, I couldn't help imagining what I would put in my own "Recipe for Recovery,"

Start with one cup of the MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS - all those dear friends who did not turn away from me when they heard of Steve's suicide; but helped in many practical, caring ways to make the first months easier.

Add several GOOD EGGS - helping professionals like my minister, the counselor who suggested TCF and the young funeral director couple who organized the TCF Chapter I attended in New York.

Throw in a few heaping tablespoons of READING MATERIALS - Books and pamphlets from the TCF Library that started my thoughts going in a positive direction.

Add THE SALT OF THE EARTH - wonderful new friends I met through TCF and other support groups. Maybe we should call them THE CREAM OF THE CROP, because eventually they rise to the top.

Sprinkle liberally with TEARS - because it's okay to cry and generously with LAUGHTER - because we can learn to smile again.

Bake in a warm oven of TENDER LOVING CARE. Be sure to make enough to share with others and freeze some for later.

That's my recipe - what's yours?

~ Cynthia Kelley, TCF/ Cincinnati, OH



2014 Holiday Angels



Given By:

DAVID HALLMAN & FAMILY
RICHARD & LINDA OLSON
SHARON COOK
SHERRY LASSLE
DALE & MARILYN LARSON

AL & CHAR ZAESKE
CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN
FRANK & MAXINE KADLEC
KEITH KUEHL
LARRY & LOIS GANGNES
ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL
VERNE & DIANE SKJEFTE
SONNY & BONNIE SKAR
ANDY & RHONDA BJELLAND
RICHARD & DIANE MACGREGOR
BRUCE & BEV JOHNSON
LAURA KUEHL

PERSYS PIERALL & FAMILY
CLARA STAIGER

ANNE & JERRY BARBEE
TOM & LEAH TVEDT
JOHN & KELLY BORGES
JOHN & TERRI HELLAND
LOWELL & PRISCILLA BOLGER
DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
SCOTT & JAMIE OLSON
KEITH & SANDRA KISER
CHRIS & DAWN CANTLER
GALEN & MARY SCHROEDER
RANDY & DEBBIE FREED

NORMA JACKSON
BILL & ELAINE SCHEER
MARY VASECKA
CAROL DUGGAN
CAROL & LIONEL KAIM
JIM, JODY & DANA KUTTER
RALPH & ETHEL HEST
NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW
DEAN & JO ALLMENDINGER
GORDEN & VIRLYN HOFF
FRANK & JAYNE THOMPSON
JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON & FAMILY
CRAIG & BARB LARSON
SANDRA & CHUCK KLINKHAMMER
PAT & DENNY WATELAND
JOHN & MARY TOBOLT
LARA E JENSEN
LYNETTE MYROLD
MICHAEL & SHARON FERRIS
CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN

In Memory of:

DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN
MATTHEW OLSON
STEVEN DUANE COOK
JAYME LASSEL
SUE ELLEN LARSON
GAIL LARSON
JOE LARSON
AMY LARSON
ERIC LARSON
BRUCE ZAESKE
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN
JEFF KADLEC
DAVID KUEHL & WENDY KUEHL
BRENT M. GANGNES
MICHAEL LIVDAHL
JAMES SKJEFTE
JACOB LYLE SKAR
HALLIE BJELLAND
SANDRA MACGREGOR CASELLA
JAY JOHNSON
SSG DAVID KUEHL
WENDY KUEHL
RAND PIERALL
TERRY STAIGER
DOUG STAIGER
MATTHEW J. GAFFNEY
DANE ADAM TVEDT
KARI RAE BORGES
HEIDI HELLAND
JOSEPH BOLGER
BRIAN BJERKEN
AUSTIN WAYNE WAGAR
CORDELL ALAN KISER
KRISTEN ELIZABETH CANTLER BOOKE
MATTHEW THIBEDAU
TYLER FREED
TRAVIS FREED
JOHN JACKSON
CRAIG SCHEER
CORRINE HOFKER
BOB (ROBERT) DUGGAN
DANNY LEE FOWLER
MICHELLE KUTTER
NANCY HEST
REED JOEL PROCHNOW
LUKE ALLMENDINGER
KARLTON Y. HOFF
GABE THOMPSON
SARAH FRANCES GUNDERSON
ERIC C. LARSON
ALEXANDER BRENT KLINKHAMMER
TRACY ANN WATELAND
SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT
RYAN W. JENSEN
DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN
KEVIN FERRIS
ANDREW H. BRAUN



2014 Holiday Angels



Given By:

LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON

CURT, CHRISTI, TYLER, JARED, ZACH,
ELLIE & AMY SWANSON

DEB WAYMAN
PAT & DUKE SAMSON

DAN & CAROL WINTER
JERRY & DEB COLE
GLENNIS OLSON
ARLEN & JULIE KOTTA
JUNE VOLK

MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI
JIM & SUZIE HILL
DAVID WENTZ
MARGARET LOE
ROBERT & ELEANOR INFELD
JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
LARRY & MARY HANSON
NORBERT & LUELLA KLEINGARTNER

MIKE & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH

TODD & SUZIE KAPAUN
RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS
GEORGE & PATTI PRATT
RICHARD & DENISE ESKILDSEN
DOLORES HARRIS
SHARON WATELAND
DIANE FENSKE
DOREEN HALVORSON
MARK & HELLA HELFTER
PETER & CHRISTINE MURCH
DEB MARKEY
ELLEN PAZDRO
SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE
LEROY & DONNA KORNELIUS
HAROLD & IRENE SCHENCK
ORELLA & CURT OLSON
JOAN & STEVE HALLAND
BECKY NELSON
LYLE & TAMMY HELGESON
SONIA WATELAND
GERALD & DELORES BEYERS
DALE & RANDIE HAAKE
RICK & TAMMY DERHEIM
ALLAN & MARLENE OSCHSNER
DAVID ROESCH
LORI BRADY & FAMILY
RALPH & CAROLYN NILLES
ANNE SNYDER
DONNA HOLLY

In Memory of:

AARON DEUTSCHER
ALLISON DEUTSCHER
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER
UNBORN BABY DEUTSCHER

AMANDA JO SWANSON
HEATHER WREN
CHRIS SAMSON
CHERYL SAMSON
MATTHEW WINTER
ZACHARY COLE
JAMIE OLSON
BENJAMIN KOTTA
JEFFERY VOLK
DAVID VOLK
MICHAEL CZICHOTZKI
JONATHAN POITRA
ANGELA MARIE WENTZ
CHRISTOPHER LOE
DARRYL INFELD
MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON
MICHAEL HANSON
DAVID KLEINGARTNER
LARAE MURCH
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
KELLY BOYES
DILLON KAPAUN
TARI ELLESS HELLER
NANCY PRATT COASH
JASON ESKILDSEN
ALLEN HARRIS
TRACY ANN WATELAND
NATHAN ANDERSON
LEE ALLEN HALVORSON
DAVID MICHAEL HELFTER
VALERIE MURCH
TIM MARKEY
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
NICOLE ANNE BLILIE
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS
DOUG SCHENCK
KATHY STRAND
COLE HALLAND
RYAN DEAN NELSON
JARED SCOTT HELGESON
MARK WATELAND
TAMMY K. CHAPUT
WADE HAAKE
KEEGAN DERHEIM
JACOB ALLAN OSCHSNER
TOMMY ROESCH
GREG SEARS
JARED NILLES
ADAM SNYDER
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH

KORSMO FUNERAL HOME

SIBLING PAGE

TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER

I never knew my brother,
Yet I knew him well.
Through my mother's eyes
I've known him,
And I love him still.
I'll grow tall and strong like him,
Yet not like him at all.
He'll be my guardian angel,
And we'll go through life together, as one.
I have his clothes and his toys
And his photos,
I hold them dear to me, But most of all,
I treasure the loving memories
My mother gave to me.

~ Karen Hoyland, TCF/Brisbane, Australia

Gifts I Would Leave for You

The gifts I would leave beneath your tree
Aren't those you could touch or see
Not wrapped in Christmas tissue gay
But a gift of life to live each day.
The fit of love, warm and true
And health your whole life through
Smiles, and happiness and cheer
To keep us happy through the year.
These are the gifts I'd leave for you
Though I know your life is through.

~ Jeffrey E. Meredith

December 2002 Sibling Corner
TCF/Phoenix, AZ

MEMORIES

My little brother who loved winter and icicles that are clear,
My heart aches and I cry because you
are now gone forever. How did time go by so fast
with all the memories we made?
They are everlasting; but without you the world is lonely
And there are no new memories.

~ Renee Miller, TCF/Troy, ID

IN LOVING MEMORY OF JOEL

I sometimes sit and wonder how
Life can go on without you now
Somehow this month it will be five years
Yet many nights I still shed tears
Siblings we were that much is true
But friends as well, that's hard to do
Sometimes your missed, more now than ever
The shock's worn off, the pain forever
Although for now, our journeys apart
Forever in my mind, my soul, my heart

~ Robyn Mather, Alberni BC

When the time comes for lighting festive candles – let
them remind you, not only of what you lost, but also of
what you had.

~ Sacha Wagner

COURAGE

My brother died three years ago, when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident, when he fell, while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and, working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said: "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

I do not like choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe are right and important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me. Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone.

I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

In loving memory of my brother Sean, 1976 - 1993

~ Patricia Kelley, TCF/Richmond, VA

Not the Same

He was a very nice man, like so many others, and yet he was so different.

His quick smile and gentle ways were like those of others and yet, he was so uncommon.

He was kind and loving with unshakable faith like others, and yet he was so unique.

He was a dutiful soldier who gave his life like many others, and yet he was so special.

The same as others? No

Not to those who knew and loved him.

He was himself, and individual, and he was my brother!

~ Pam Miller Farrell, TCF/Evansville, IL

Ten Tips For Surviving The Difficult Holidays After Your Child Dies

With Thanksgiving and the normally festive holidays around the corner, millions of families throughout the United States that have lost a child are struggling with how they can simply survive to see the new year.

"The stress that bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents face during the hustle and bustle of the holidays can feel overwhelming," says Patricia Loder, former executive director of The Compassionate Friends. "It is difficult for those who have not gone through the death of a child to understand the depth of despair which such a loss brings."

Mrs. Loder, whose two young children died in a car crash in 1991, says there are many tips that can help a grieving family prepare for the holidays.

- 1) *Plan ahead.* Realize you will not be able to do everything with everyone. Decide what is truly important to you and your family.
- 2) *Don't be afraid to ask friends for help.* Tasks which may normally take little effort can feel overwhelming, whether it's fixing a meal, cleaning the house, or putting up decorations.
- 3) *No one expects you* to string rows and rows of lights just to prove you have the holiday spirit. If you don't feel up to past efforts, you may simply want to place an electric powered candle in your window in memory of your child.
- 4) *Just because you've hosted holiday gatherings in the past* doesn't mean you're obligated to this year. Others will understand.
- 5) *After a child dies, old traditions are often left behind* and new ones that incorporate the child who died can take their place. Honor the memory of your child in unique ways that have meaning to you.
- 6) *Surviving children should be included in your plans.* They too mourn their sibling, but need a normalcy the holidays can provide.
- 7) *If you don't get everything done that you plan, be easy on yourself.* Grief is tough work and you should never feel guilty for not getting everything done.
- 8) *If you must shop for others, find a time when the stores are not extremely busy,* like early morning, order through the internet or ask others to shop for you.
- 9) *Participating in a memorial service,* such as The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, the second Sunday in December, can be very meaningful. This can be done in a formal service with others or through a short private candle lighting in the privacy of your home.
- 10) *Remember* that the fearful anticipation of an approaching holiday is usually worse than the day itself. "Many people believe that they can escape the holidays by leaving home on a vacation," adds Mrs. Loder. "This rarely helps because grief can never be left behind and it is important to have the support of relatives and friends. Talking with others who have also lost a child can help those facing grief to understand they are not alone. Others have survived the holidays and they will too."

Letting Go

Recently I received an award for volunteering in the community. I was honored to receive it. Some of the people in my life mentioned that it looked like I had "let go" of the pain of losing my child. "Let go?" Of course, they don't understand.

But when the award was mentioned at our monthly Compassionate Friends meeting, a bereaved mother made an interesting observation that touched my heart and reminded me why I need this special group to keep me centered and balanced.

"I remember that article you read to us last Mother's Day....the one your son wrote about how proud he was of you," she said. "Wouldn't it be great to put that article in our memory book with the newspaper article about your award? He was right about you. He was proud of you."

What a great idea! What a wonderful way to bring my son into my life even though he is no longer on this plane. That's what Compassionate Friends do.....they help to bring our children into our lives even though our children are no longer alive. For a few hours each month, our children return to us. We're proud parents who can share our children's stories and keep our children in our lives.....without explaining why we won't be "letting go."

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, In memory of my son, Todd Mennen, TCF/Katy, TX

LOST POTENTIAL

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent one thing stuck in my mind.

He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and a new each year as our child would have been a different age.

~ Chris Anderson, TCF/Walla Walla, Washington

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name in the newsletter. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

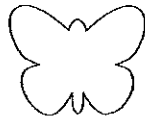
Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

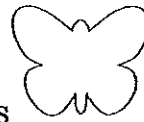
Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

(Signature) _____ Date: _____

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, P.O. Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106
(Please note that if you have already submitted a permission slip, you do not need to submit another one)



Butterfly Decals



Our trailer is beginning to look like a butterfly garden! The trailer was purchased in order to transport materials to our chapter activities but it has also helped make our local chapter better known in the Fargo-Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our precious children.

Butterflies are still available in all five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost for 1 butterfly is \$25, 3 butterflies are \$65 and 4 butterflies are \$80. If you wish to purchase more than 4, please contact our chapter leader, John Milligan. Butterfly orders should include the child's name and color of the butterfly. Checks should be made payable to TCF of Fargo-Moorhead and the order mailed to PO Box 10686, Fargo, ND 58106.

You can see pictures of the trailer with butterflies on our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourtrailer.html.

"Some say you're too painful to remember. I say you're too precious to forget."

Our Mom's group has been meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fryn' Pan Restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo. Due to the Christmas holiday, the Mom's meeting will held on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Our gatherings are informal as we come together to talk about our children, books that we've read, recipes we've tried, our jobs and whatever else comes up during the course of the evening. We all have times where the listening heart of another mom or grandma is welcome (and necessary). Please join us this month on Thursday December 18th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-235-8158 or sherylc13@msn.com.

"I Know How You Feel — My Dog Died"

These words can bring murderous rage to the hearts of bereaved parents when spoken by well meaning, but errant, friends. I never actually had this experience, but several of my friends did, and the result was always the same - a compelling desire to strangle the person with one's bare hands.

On the morning of December 21, my husband and I said a tearful final goodbye to Gretchen, our beautiful Doberman, who had been a constant companion, loving friend, protector, and source of great joy for nearly eight years. She was, in a word, magnificent.

The pain and feelings of sadness are tremendous. As I look around at the empty bed, the dish in the kitchen, the favorite toy, I am overwhelmed with an intense sense of loss and sorrow. Memories of happy times, daily rituals and the unconditional love that only a pet can give assail from all directions. Tears flow uncontrollably. I really hurt.

No, it can't compare with the loss of my son. This pain will pass before long; we will get another dog (although there can never be another Gretchen); in years to come, we will remember her with love and wonderful memories; she will never be forgotten.

But it is *not* the same. I know this because I have lost a child. Only one who has walked this road can know that no other loss, no matter how profound, can compare with the death of a child. If I had not had this experience, I, too, might be tempted to say, "I know how you feel - my dog died."

We must endeavor to understand that these words are spoken from the heart - from someone whose pain is intense and who knows no better point of reference. And we must pray that those who speak these words will never know. . .

My pain is assuaged somewhat by my firm belief that Gretchen is now in the loving care of my beloved Robert, who will enjoy and love her as we did. She is in good hands. I know they are having a wonderful time.

~ Carole Ragland, TCF/Houston West Chapter, TX

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
OF THE F-M AREA
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***The
Compassionate
Friends***
Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MISSION STATEMENT: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS...We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Chapter Leader | John Milligan..... 701-491-0364 | Newsletter Editor | Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805 |
| Meeting Facilitator | Paul & Kara Bailey..... 701-261-0668 | Newsletter Database | Mike Cvijanovich 701-235-8158 |
| Secretary | Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-235-8158 | Website Administrator | Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-235-8158 |
| Treasurer | Chuck Klinkhammer 701-298-2929 | Newsletter Printing | Joyce at Olivet Lutheran Church |
| Initial Contact | Jamie Olson 701-219-3865 | Mailing Committee | Contact Us to Join |
| Librarian | Contact Us to Volunteer | | |

LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:

| | |
|---|--------------|
| John Milligan (son, 25 - car accident) | 701-491-0364 |
| Duane Skramstad (daughter, 20 - car accident; son, 2 - drowning)..... | 701-437-2507 |
| Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) | 701-282-4083 |
| Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness)..... | 701-730-0805 |
| Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage & son, 35 - accident)..... | 701-235-9622 |

Love gifts must be received by the 15th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____
Name _____
Address _____
Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____

NOTE: By giving a love gift, you are giving us permission to include your child(ren) in our monthly birthdays and anniversaries.