

The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

TCF's National Office
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook IL 60522
Toll-free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

F-M Area Chapter
P.O. Box 10686
Fargo ND 58106
www.tcffargomoorhead.org
December 2016

Volume 33 Number 12

Chapter Leader - John Milligan (701)491-0364

Newsletter Editor - Nancy Teeuwen (701)730-0805

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 8th
January 12th

Dates to Remember

Angel of Hope Memorial Service
December 6th at 7 pm at Fargo's
Angel of Hope in Island Park
Worldwide Candle Lighting December
11th at 7 p.m. local time
Mom's meeting - 7 pm on December
22nd @ Fry'n Pan
TCF National Conference - Orlando,
Florida July 28-30, 2017

LOVE GIFTS

Jim & Suzie Hill in memory of
their son, Jonathan Poitra
Sharon Wateland in memory of her
goddaughter, Tracy Ann Wateland
Pat & Denny Wateland in memory
of their daughter, Tracy Ann
Wateland
Scott & Ruth Blilie in memory of
their daughter, Nicole Anne Blilie
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.

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



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.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 19th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WWCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

2017 FM TCF Chapter Meeting Dates

January 12th	February 9th
March 9th	April 13th
May 11th	June 8th
July 13th	August 10th
September 14th	October 12th
November 9th	December 14th

COMING UNWRAPPED

We wrap ourselves for the holidays much like the presents we give. The brightly colored paper hides what's within. When people look at us they only see the outside. We promise ourselves we will not come unwrapped. We'll make it through the family celebrations, the church services, and the big occasion. The paper and the ribbon will remain intact. But it is the small thing that manages to untie the bow. The little insignificant moment, the Christmas parade, the search for the tree, the discovered ornament, the special carol, the memory and the paper gets wrenched off. The true Christmas presence shows itself. The inevitable tide of feelings bursts out of the artificially decorated facade. The emotions pour out. The intense anger wells up. The tears are shed and the holidays come. These are as sure as the tides of the sea and the march of time.

Only a compassionate friend, a bereaved parent, knows of what I speak. Yet the answer isn't in fighting or in denying these feelings. We have paid the price. We have the right to grieve. The resolution of our grief is the grieving. Our hope for all who read this letter is that you will make it through the holidays. We cannot make the pain go away, but know there are others who suffer with you.

We have made it, and together will continue on.

~ Hank Hewett, TCF/Scranton, PA

Uncharacteristic Behaviors

When Junior, the National Zoo's resident ape went on his escape travels a few months ago, the story was recorded in the local papers. This was probably because he came close to hopping over his barrier and into the laps of his human observers, many of them children. The press called this "uncharacteristic behavior" and, in a side note, added that his long time mate, Pency had recently died.

Now you and I would put all of this into proper perspective and agree, "Of course!" And then we would reflect upon our own "uncharacteristic behaviors" following the death of our beloved (grand) child (ren).

Many times these behaviors confound and confuse those close to us. How far will we go beyond our barriers? And will we return and be "ourselves" again? I was amazed at emotions I had never felt so strongly before. I thought that anger would become a permanent part of my reactions and I welcomed any kind of release from it. Confronting it and dealing with it was difficult. Sadness settled upon me like a soggy fleece and I thought that I might never shrug it off! And the apathy with which I met each day was very concerning, indeed! Junior's escapade brought all of my own "uncharacteristic behaviors" up from the not so distant past. Amusing?...a little; but more than that I wanted to shout with the children who watched him that late summer day, and encourage him to run and run, shaking off the grief and sadness of losing his beloved Pency.

~ Lorie Hartsig, TCF/St. Mary's County, MD

November love gift that was missed last month
Clare & Richard Elles in memory of their daughter, Tari
Elless Heller.

GIFTS FROM ABOVE

They came from different places,
they came from different homes.
These gifts of children from above,
that we claimed as our own.

These precious gifts were given
with love from God above.
Because He thought us worthy
to care for these gifts with love.

These priceless gifts were welcomed
by parents around the world.
Celebrating the joys they brought,
these tiny boys and girls.

It amazes us and gives us pause
that we were chosen to receive,
These cherished gifts from above
-what an honor we believe.

We wonder why our gifts could not stay.
Could it be they were much too loved?
These precious gifts of our children –

Loved, missed and remembered
-These precious gifts from above.

They left us much too soon, we think.
And we continue to question, "Why?"
It does not seem fair to us,
That our children had to die.

We are left with empty arms and shattered dreams.
Grief and pain now fill our lives.
Our homes that once were filled with laughter,
Now harbor our anguished cries.

When finally we emerge from
the quicksand of fresh raw grief,
We start to search for reasons left
to live so we can find relief.

We long to hear from others like us
with hearts that understand.
Then someone may tell us of a place where people
meet called The Compassionate Friends.

There we find a group of people like us
joined by the bond of grief and love.
Where we can share together about our children,
These precious "Gifts From Above".

~ Faye McCord, TCF/Co-Chapter Leader, Jackson, MS

"Do what you can this season, and let it be enough. But whatever you do, try not to lose the holiday completely."

~ Darcie Sims

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

~ Jim Lowery, TCF, Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Tabloids

The line in the grocery store was long that day, leaving plenty of time to scan the magazines positioned near the checkout counter to catch the attention of restless, impatient customers. "Flatten Your Tummy," "Lose 40 Pounds in 30 Minutes with Our Amazing New Diet," "Eat Prune Pits for a healthy Sex Life," and on and on.

I thought about parents in grief. And I know the response most of us have in the early weeks, months and years of grief: What does it matter? Why should I be concerned about health? Life takes on a different meaning after a child dies. We feel like we will never again care if our tummies are flat and our muscles are strong.

If there had been an article on the rack that day about getting up when I'm not sure if I can walk, drinking water when I cannot even swallow, breathing in and out without sighing, waking up or going to sleep without flashbacks, staying silent when my heart wants to scream... I would have bought it.

~ Alice Monroe, TCF/ CO

THE SINGLE MOST MEMORABLE HOLIDAY I'VE EVER HAD

I'm not writing here to sadden anyone, but as a tribute to LOVE, FAMILY, and FAITH. My daughter, Michelle, was murdered on December 6. While gathering her things to bring home, we found Michelle had lovingly made Christmas gifts for everyone in the family. Family came from Florida, Canada, Arizona, and here in Georgia and remained through the holidays.

Sometime before the incident, my daughter told me that she had a dream that the whole family was together at Christmas time and she was outside the window looking in. She said that in her dream she felt such a feeling of contentment at seeing us all together. It had been years since all of the family had been together.

We decided to have Christmas as Michelle would have wanted it. My husband and I wrapped the gifts Michelle had so lovingly made for those she loved. On Christmas morning, while we were opening the gifts, my husband told me to look out the window. There are two rocking chairs on the porch and one was rocking back and forth. My husband reached over and held my hand. It was at that moment I remembered what Michelle had told us about her dream, and I realized then that her dream had become a reality. Michelle was still with all of us and was indeed content at watching the family she loved so much sharing the joy of Christmas together.

I also realized Michelle would always be watching me and that, though in one sense she had been taken from us, she would always be part of all of us. The little gifts she made for everyone that Christmas would be treasured for many Christmases to come, but what would be treasured most was her LOVE OF FAMILY and the FAITH of knowing that one day we will be together again.

~ Ann Marie Parman

~Life is Like a Mobile.....Someone once told me that when your family changes you need to look at it like a mobile. It is in this perfect balance until you lose one of the members. If you yanked off one strand from the mobile it would rock to and fro for some time trying to rebalance itself. When it finished rocking it would not though be level like when you started.

Over time things shift and it becomes more balanced once again. I think this is a good word picture of what it is that we experience when we lose a child. You my friend are in the hard rocking stages where the mobile is trying to right itself and balance out after the piece has been



yanked from it.

~shared by Laura, TCF Online Sharing

Hope as a Goal

Hope for a healed future and a new normal life is difficult to see in the shadow of the loss of a child. Hope is always present in our lives but must be sought, perhaps as a goal. Don't ever give up hope that your pain will subside and that someday a peaceful feeling will take its place. This attainment of peace does not happen overnight, unfortunately. Keep sight of your goal and someday it will be a reality.

~ Janet Sonnen, TCF/Salem, OR

A Mother's Christmas Prayer to Her Heavenly Child

By Peggy Pohlen

I know you're spending Christmas with Jesus this year, however, could you do one thing for your mother down here? Would you send down some of your love, from heaven above?

To release some of my pain, so I may have emotional gain. That I may bear your loss – it is such a heavy cross.

Send down some of the joy you feel from up there. Help me to feel some of the joy on this day,

Even though you are not here, in the same way. Help me to feel your presence and your love, even though you're spending Christmas with the Christ Child above.

Help the extended family to understand my grief, and not to be afraid to offer me relief.

Let them say your name, and the memories that follow, to give me something to grasp onto until tomorrow.

I know that you're spending Christmas with Jesus this year, but oh, how I wish that you were here!!

A Tree Full of Memories

Christmas was my absolute favorite time of the entire year. Every nook and cranny was filled with Yule adornment. Not a corner of the house was safe from this self-proclaimed Christmas Freak! One year we even hung assorted ornaments on a fake palm tree, lovingly dubbing it the "Bahama-Mama" tree, because in our family one Christmas tree was never enough. The kids even had small tabletop trees in their rooms. Our upstairs tree was the decorator tree, the one with the fancy, color coordinated ornaments, to be handled by no one but me. The downstairs tree was the family favorite and trimmed by the children. Hanging from its branches were the ornaments that I had purchased every year for each of them from the time they were born. I always looked forward to finding just the right one that would represent their individual interests at that particular time in their lives. But as each of us knows, the holidays, as we knew them, forever changed after our precious children died. And so it was for us the Christmas of 1995, our first without Nina's shining presence. I was quite positive that I would never decorate again. It was far too painful.

Yet, something happened three Christmases ago. One night I lay in Nina's daybed, staring at the ceiling thinking Scrooge-like thoughts, wishing it was January 2nd and I could put the holidays behind me for another year. Suddenly, I found myself rise from her bed and walk to the closet where all the holiday paraphernalia was stored. I searched furiously until I found what I was looking for—a box marked "Nina's Xmas Ornaments." I brushed away the collected dust and carried it up the stairs to the corner of the living room where a forlorn and neglected-appearing 2-foot tree stood. I recall sitting on the floor in front of the tree, sighing deeply, and gingerly opening the box, I was afraid what the depth of my emotions would be when I saw those long untouched ornaments of Christmases past; afraid of the feelings that I had learned to hide so well from the rest of the world; afraid the floodgates would open and the tears would never stop.

I carefully lifted the cover and tenderly held each one in my hands. I found myself recalling the beautiful memories of previous Christmases when my beloved daughter was alive. There was the pink and white checked fabric baby buggy with pipe cleaner handles of her first Xmas, followed by Teddy bears with Santa hats, and crocheted Sesame Street characters from her toddler days. There were the priceless picture ornaments taken by her nursery school teacher showing 4-year old Nina with the then-

blond, wispy hair and blunt cut bangs grinning back at me. There were the handmade ones from early grade school that she affectionately created with felt and glitter; the violin and piano ornaments symbolizing her musical attempts; the self-explanatory Shop-til-You-Drop ornament; the more sophisticated ornaments for a teenage Nina, and finally the last one before her death at 15-years old commemorating her reign as our city's Miss Teen. I gently held them, reliving the stories behind each one and savoring the precious memories they brought with them as I placed them on the tiny tree. I then unearthed from hiding the ornaments bought after her death. Even then, I couldn't bear to stop buying them for her. There I found dark-haired angels and butterflies of every shape and color, now symbolizing her new and eternal life, and appropriately hung them alongside the others.

Though tears fell as I cautiously placed them on the bare branches of the tiny tree, I felt familiar warmth radiate throughout my body, thawing the coldness in my heart and soul. I smiled, knowing in my heart that this was a Christmas gift coming directly from Nina. I felt it was her way of telling me that perhaps it was time to find some peace and hope again in the holiday season. Not that it would or could ever be the same as it was before 1995, or that I would ever stop missing her presence, but perhaps now begin to remember some of the joy found in priceless memories of holiday's past.

If you are in the early years of your grief, you believe you will never again feel any amount of enjoyment in the holidays. However, allow myself and other seasoned grievers to be the bearers of hope. At one time we felt just like you. When you feel ready for even a spark of pleasure in the holidays, let it return to your heart again. I sincerely believe our children want us, in time, to accept their spirit gifts of renewed joy, peace, and hope sent to us from them with love.

With peace and gentle thoughts through this holiday season and always,

~ Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

TURNING TRAGEDY INTO POSITIVE ACTION

It has been some time now since we lost Tom, --six years.

I still think of him every day, and wonder "what might have been".

I always have strong feelings that Tom was cheated. He never had a chance to do all the "growing up" things in life, drive a car, go fishing, college, marriage, children, etc.

He was a person who loved life and humor. He really enjoyed a good laugh. He was always the diplomat in our family. When there were any disruptions in our family, he was the problem solver.

We miss him . . . but know life goes on.

One thing that helps me accept his death is my work with Compassionate Friends. I know that Tom would want it this way. He loved people, young and old. He had a concern, a compassion for his fellow man.

I am proud to be associated with The Compassionate Friends because I know this is what he would want--to reach out and try to help others help them-selves.

~ Donald Bauman, TCF/Fairmont, MN

Hold tight the love our family gave us. Hold it tight through the storms of grief and bring it with you into TODAY.

~Darcie D Sims "Footsteps Through the Valley"



OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
NICOLE ANNE BLILIE	27	SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE
STEVEN DUANE COOK	48	SHARON COOK
SARAH FRANCES GUNDERSON	30	JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON
DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN	28	DAVID HALLMAN
.....		LYNETTE MYROLD
KARL HELFTER	46	MARK & HELLA HELFTER
BENJAMIN GAFFREY KNIER	29	FRANK KNIER & MARY GAFFREY KNIER
TONY MILLER	28	SHAWN MILLER
JOSE DANIEL SAUVEGEAU	20	DANIEL SAUVEGEU & MARY BJERKE
GREGORY SEARS	29	LORI & JERRY BRADY
.....		PERSYS PIERSALL (Grandmother)
SCOTT WARNECKE	48	DOUG & JOAN WARNECKE
TRACY ANN WATELAND	45	DENNIS & PAT WATELAND
.....		SHARON WATELAND (Godmother)
BRUCE ALLEN ZAESKE	54	ALAN & CHARLEEN ZAESKE

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
BENJAMIN GORDON ASHER	2	JERRY & BONNIE ASHER
NICOLE ANNE BLILIE	9	SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE
KARI RAE BORGEN	10	JOHN & KELLY BORGEN
KIRSTIN ELIZABETH CANTLER-BOOKE ...	7	CHRIS & DAWN CANTLER (Grandparents)
JULIE M ERICKSON	2	JANET ERICKSON
BRIAN W FOSS	8	ED & ELSIE FOSS
TYLER JAY FREED	6	RANDY & DEBBIE FREED
SARAH FRANCES GUNDERSON	4	JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON
ASHLEY RAE HAINES	5	WILLIAM HAINES III
DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN	23	DAVID HALLMAN
.....		LYNETTE MYROLD
NANCY DIANE HEST	12	RALPH & ETHEL HEST
TARA LEA KELLAR	5	CATHY & GREG GRONLAND
JODY ANN MAURER KNUDSON	7	JOHN & SHARON MAURER
JONATHAN LEVI POITRA	6	SUZIE & JAMES HILL
CHERYL L SAMSON	5	DUKE & PATRICIA SAMSON

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

I will love the light
For it shows me the way.
Yet I will endure the darkness
For it shows me the stars.
- Og Mandin



2016 Holiday Angels



Given By:

CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
 RUSSELL & ANNE JOHNSON
 DONNA QUAM
 NORBERT & LUELLA KLEINGARTNER

PATTI PRATT
 MIKE & JAN KNUDSON
 DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
 ANDY & RHONDA BJELLAND
 HAROLD & IRENE SCHENCK
 JIM & SUZIE HILL
 DEBBY & DAVID FACEY

CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN
 BECKY NELSON
 DAVID & SALLY HALLMAN
 JOANN NYGARD, KATHY & GREG
 JOHN & NANCY TEEUWEN & FAMILY
 JIM & PHIL NELSON
 PAT & DENNY WATELAND
 SONIA WATELAND
 ANNE & JERRY BARBEE
 MIKE & RHONDA QUALLEY.
 PERSYS PIERSALL
 JEFF & ANN CLARK
 JIM, SHAWN, ALEX, ELINAH & DANIELLE MILLER

LORI & LARRY WIGER
 LISA BEACH
 SANDRA & CHARLES KLINKHAMMER
 TJADEN, ANDREA, JACKSON, BRIELLE
 & THORNTON SINCLAIR
 ANNE SNYDER
 LARRY & MARY HANSON
 SHARON COOK
 RAMONA KADOUN

SHERRY LASSLE
 DEWAYNE & ARLENE PETERSON
 MARK & HELLA HELFTER
 MARK & HELLA HELFTER
 RANDY & DEBBIE FREED

BLAINE & MEGAN KUMMER
 JOAN & STEVE HALLAND
 MUGS LOE
 SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE
 JOHN & TAMMY SADEK

LYLE, TAMMY, JUSTIN, STACY, HUNTER, JERSEY,
 JAIME & JORDYN HELGESON
 DEB WAYMAN

In Memory of:

MATT HOLLAND
 TODD ALLEN JOHNSON
 KRISSY QUAM KEELAN
 DAVID KLEINGARTNER
 LARAE MURCH
 PAUL MORLOCK
 NANCY (PRATT) COASH
 DEBORAH CHERYL KYLLO
 BRIAN BJERKEN
 HALLIE BJELLAND
 DOUG SCHENCK
 JONATHAN POITRA
 DANA KEBLAR
 FRED FINCH
 CHOLE GRACE RONGEN
 RYAN NELSON
 DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN
 DALE NYGARD
 BRANDI ROSE IRENE TEEUWEN
 JANE NELSON SNYDER
 TRACY ANN WATELAND
 MARK ALAN WATELAND
 MATTHEW J. GAFFNEY
 ANNIKA LORRAINE QUALLEY
 RAND L. PIERSALL
 TODD CLARK
 TONY MILLER
 KELSEY GRACE MILLER
 ASHLEY ARLENE WIGER
 NATHAN KEITH BEACH
 ALEXANDER B. KLINKHAMMER

LOLA ELISE SINCLAIR
 ADAM JOSEPH SNYDER
 MICHAEL HANSON
 STEVEN DUANE COOK
 TOM
 JIM
 DEETTA LOUISE NICHOLS
 JAYME LASSLE
 SHERI PETERSON BJORGAN
 DAVID MICHAEL HELFTER
 KARL JOSEPH HELFTER
 TYLER FREED
 TRAVIS FREED
 LIAM PAUL KUMMER
 COLE HALLAND
 CHRISTOPHER LOE
 NICOLE ANNE BLILIE
 NICK SADEK
 ANDREW SADEK

JARED SCOTT HELGESON
 HEATHER WREN

KORSMO FUNERAL SERVICES



2016 Holiday Angels



Given By:

JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
RICHARD & LINDA OLSON
TOM & NANCY KASSMAN
CAROL DUGGAN
TOM & BONNIE WOLD
TOM & LEAH TVEDT
NORMA JACKSON

DONNA & LEROY KORNELIUS
PAULINE & TIM RINKE
LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON

MARLYS KESSEL
JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON
MIKE & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH

ELEANOR INFELD
BLAKE & CHRISTINE DAHLBERG

DAN & CAROL WINTER
NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW & FAMILY
CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
JOHN & TERRI HELLAND
MARK & JEAN CHAFFEE
BIRDINE GRAFSGAARD
RICHARD & DIANE MACGREGOR
MARY & GALEN SCHROEDER
DALE & MARILYN LARSON

BILL & ELAINE SCHEER
DUKE & PAT SAMSON

JANET ERICKSON
KELLY & JOHN BORGEN
JERRY, DEB, & ANDY COLE
ALLEN & CHARLEEN ZAESKE
MARY TOBOLT
BRAD & JACKIE MOEN
LARRY & LOIS GANGNES
DONNA HOLLEY
ELLEN PAZDRO
BILL & LOIS SCHAFFER
KEITH & SANDRA KISER
STEVEN & LISA EICHOLTZ
DOUG & KAREN HANSEN
PAUL, KARA BAILEY & FAMILY
GLENNIS OLSON
JIM & JODY KUTTER
CLARE & RICHARD ELLESS
CRAIG & BARB LARSON
DIANE FENSKE
BRENDA KLUTH

In Memory of:

MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON
MATTHEW ALLEN OLSON
KYLE KASSMAN
BOB (ROBERT) DUGGAN
CHAD WOLD
DANE ADAM TVEDT
JOHN JACKSON
HENRY NERAT
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS
LOGAN RINKE
AARON DEUTSCHER
ALLISON DEUTSCHER
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER
UNBORN BABY DEUTSCHER
ANGEL ANNIKA LORRAINE QUALLEY
SARAH FRANCES
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
KELLY BOYES
DARRYL INFELD
RILEY DAHLBERG
SHANE TERRY
MATTHEW WINTER
REED JOEL PROCHNOW
ANDREW HOWARD BRAUN
HEIDI HELLAND
KONNIE JEAN CHAFFEE
DAVID GRAFSGAARD
SANDRA MACGREGOR CASELLA
MATTHEW THIBEDAU
SUE ELLEN LARSON
JOE LARSON
GAIL LARSON
AMY LARSON
ERIC LARSON
CRAIG SCHEER
CHERYL SAMSON
CHRIS SAMSON
JULIE ERICKSON
KARI RAE BORGEN
ZACHARY COLE
BRUCE ZAESKE
SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT
JESSICA MOEN
BRENT M. GANGNES
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
ERIC SCHAFFER
CORDELL A. KISER
TYLER JUSTIN EICHOLTZ
KENT ALAN HANSEN
NICK BAILEY
JAMIE OLSON
MICHELLE KUTTER
TARI ELLESS HELLER
ERIC C. LARSON
NATHAN ANDERSON
BRANDON KLUTH

SIBLING PAGE

MERRY CHRISTMAS, ASHLEY

If I could make a Christmas wish
And know it would come true
I'd wish to have on more Christmas
Just to spend with you.
You were here in times of trouble
To help make me strong
You were here to share Christmas joy
And sing with us a song.
I was given the finest gift
To have a sister like you
For you were one true blessing
A gift my whole life through.

~ Lisa Sockwell Meredith, TCF/Atlanta, GA
Sister of Ashley

My Time to Go Home

It was my time, the time for me
to go back home to be free.
A time for me to learn to fly,
with new wings above the sky.
The angels came to guide my way,
making sure I did not stray.
So many things to see up here,
I'm much at peace, I have no fear.
I see many people that I know,
all from the world I lived below.
I hear the bells when they ring,
I dance with the angels when they sing.
I know you miss me, and I miss you all
But I had to leave when I heard them call.
Please don't cry, I am so free,
try to be happy, Please for me.
I see you all from up above,
I continue to give you my eternal love.
My journey here has just begun,
I'm living my dreams I left undone.
Life is quick, you must live yours now,
I can't do it for you or tell you how.
But listen to these words, they come from my heart
they will help to ease the pain while we're apart.
We will meet again, face to face
only this time in a better place.
So you see, it was my time, it was his plan,
I was sent to learn lessons, and return when I can
Now it's time for me to move on,
But I'm always around you, I will never be gone.
And someday, you too will see,
this beautiful home made for you and me.

By Lisa McQuade for her brother, Bobby
We Need Not Walk Alone - Summer 2004

SHE'S HERE...BUT NOT

She's here but she's there.
She's with us, but she's not.
She's right around the bend,
But then she's gone again.
She's far away but so near.
It's like she's gone but here again.

~ Stacy Sharp, TCF/Defiance, OH

NAMASTE - THE LIGHT IN ME SALUTES THE LIGHT IN YOU

I believe that we are here on this planet to experience what it means to be a Spirit in a physical body. The greater the experience, the deeper it touches our soul. This includes pleasure and pain, happiness and sadness, hope and despair, lightness and darkness. For we cannot know one without the other. This is a time to experience our grief. I pray that we all give ourselves that right and honor our grieving process. Through grief we heal.

These are the things that I grieve for:

- I grieve for the loss of my only brother.
- I grieve that I will never come home to see him sitting in the living room to say hello.
- I grieve that we will never laugh together again, that I will never again experience that rich and unique humor that only he and I shared.
- I grieve that this world will no longer get to enjoy his humanness and his many gifts.
- I grieve that I will never see my brother in love, that I will never see him as a father or with a family of his own.
- I grieve that we will no longer share and inspire each other with the music that we love.
- I grieve that we will never get to work on a creative multi-media project together. This was a vision I held for the future.
- I grieve that I didn't share enough of my life experiences with my brother, and that I could have opened my heart even more.
- I grieve for all the people that Jason touched and the feelings of pain and loss that they are experiencing.

This is what I grieve for. Through death new life is birthed and though we cannot see it now, from Jason's death we will all experience new life. If we allow ourselves to grieve fully, this new life will become apparent. I love the spirit who gave me the privilege and pleasure of being my brother and I am grateful to experience 24 years of his beauty on this planet.

~ Jeff Curnutt

I Carried Him

I went into the school.
I felt cold, a feeling of death in the air.
My body shook, my knees gave way.
I stumbled to his locker.
The halls were empty.
I looked at the locker.
Took too many tries to open it.
In front of me were his books, jackets, and papers.
As I cleaned out his locker, tears came.
Never felt so alone.
Gathered his stuff in my arms.
Tears covered my face.
Slowly walked down the hall.
A feeling-
I felt him.

He was in my arms.
It felt like I was carrying his body.
I cried, many tears filled my eyes.
Thoughts entered my mind -
He was no more.

~ Donald Freeman, TCF/Brunswick, ME

Differences Between A Man's Grief and A Woman's Grief

I have attended many support groups since my daughter, Kristina's death May 26, 2008. I have observed differences in how grief is experienced in men and how grief is experienced in women. I have also heard it said by many leaders and in many articles how unique grief is to each individual. So even though I feel I can make some generalizations based on what I have personally seen and heard, there will invariably be many exceptions.

My opinion is that the difference in how grief is experienced is at its peak in the earliest days, weeks, and months of the grief journey. There may still be differences after six months and to a lesser extent after a year, but over time as grief is processed men and women seem to become more similar in handling grief. I have noticed how men differ from women when they speak at support group meetings. Many men will choke up and become unable to speak. Women may become very emotional, but most women still can speak even if it is with difficulty. Also, the men seem to be more of one extreme or the other, either they become too choked up to speak, or they can speak about their loss with apparent ease. Many women need to have a number of friends to repeat their story over and over. Men, on the other hand, have very few friends they choose to share with, and many times no one at all. Another difference I have experienced more myself than observed at meetings is called "compartmentalizing". I assume I am not the only one to experience this because I ran into a description of this in a book also.

It seems like men in general have difficulty with verbalizing about their loss. Many times it seems to bring on an intense emotional experience which has happened to me at times. I think it is for that reason many men do not attend support group meetings. Many times men will attend one meeting and never return. A number of those tried to speak at a meeting and found themselves unable to speak because of being too choked up. Women seem to be able to speak even at times they become emotional. This has varied widely in the groups I have attended, sometimes women can speak fairly freely and other times have a great deal of difficulty.

There is a video/book called "Tear Soup" that deals with the subject of loss from many causes. The premise is that grief can be from many things, not only from a death. The video portrays the man keeping off to himself while the woman is talking to many others. This seems to me like a realistic portrayal based on what I have heard in support groups.

In my opinion this is most relevant in the first few weeks after a loss, as the shock starts to wear off the men will socialize more, but not necessarily talk about their loss. Women will look for people to talk to from the beginning. My experience was similar to men in general, I had one special person that I talked to about my feelings of grief, rather than many. It seems that women are better than men at listening, especially when it comes to feelings, and the person I talked to was a woman. She was willing to take a call about anytime, although for me the early morning hours were the most common time for intense sadness. I will never know what would have happened if there had not been that special person to listen to me.

The concept of "compartmentalizing" I have found varies so much between people that some people seem to understand the concept immediately when it is introduced into a conversation and others seem to have no idea what it is. In my opinion this compartmentalizing is more common to men than women, but by no means exclusive. A leader in one of my support groups feels a more logically minded person is more prone to this compartmentalizing than a person who is not as logical in their thinking. In my reading I don't find this to be supported. In any case the way this is manifested is the rational side of the mind "knows" the truth, understands the death, but the emotional side does not. For me it was the strangest feeling when this was more intense, how can you know that something has happened and "feel" like it has not? I have had this sense of "unreality" become more intense and less intense at various times. Even after two or three years these feelings resurface at holidays, these feelings of "unreality". The explanation given for this in books I have read is that it is the mind's way of protecting itself. From that perspective the grief journey is more difficult for those that do not have so much of a gap between rational understanding and emotional understanding.

While the grief journey for men and woman starts out very different they become more similar over time. Men tend to stay off to themselves in the early months of grief, then gradually resume being more social. The people that have strong compartmentalizing in the early months of grief, more men than woman, find that this lessens over time.

~ Lance Beigh, TCF/Of The Greater Kankakee Area, IL

THE GRIEVER'S HOLIDAY BILL OF RIGHTS

By Bruce Conley

1. You have a right to say TIME OUT! anytime you need to. Time out to let up, blow off a little steam, step away from the holidays, have a "huddle", and start over.
2. You have a right to TELL IT LIKE IT IS. When people ask, "How are you?" you have the right to tell them how you really feel, not just what they want to hear. (P.S. You also have the right to smile and say you're fine, because telling them how you really feel isn't worth your time---some people will never understand anyway.)
3. You have the right to some "BAH HUM BUG" DAYS. You are not a bad person just because you don't feel like singing Christmas carols all day.
4. You have the right to DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY. There is no law that says you must always do Christmas the same way. You can do 10 cards instead of 100--or no cards at all! You can open your presents at somebody else's house. You can do without a tree. You can have pizza instead of turkey--the list is endless.
5. You have the right to be WHERE YOU WANT TO BE. Be at home or at the relatives. Be in any city, any state you chose! NOBODY SAID YOU HAVE TO HAVE SNOW TO HAVE CHRISTMAS. There's no law that says you must stay at home.
6. You have a right to SOME FUN. When you have a day that isn't so bad and you feel like doing something just for fun, then do it! Don't be afraid of what someone else will say if they see you laughing and having a good time. Laughter is every bit as important as tears!

Christmas Without My Child

Last night we held our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting for November: the topic was Holidays and Grief. We met in small groups to discuss how we are going to get through this most difficult of times. While we found no single answer, we did make some discoveries about ourselves. We also found some basic ways to take control of our lives.

In our group of eleven were several newly bereaved parents. Deep sorrow and anxiety were apparent in each face as we opened the dialogue—a discussion of the holiday season without their children. This anxiety and deep sorrow immediately became mine; I am that parent, I am still on the first leg of what may be a long journey without my child. Their tears were mine as we talked.

As the discussion progressed, I could see a bit of each parent's tension slowly release. I felt as if I could read their minds: give me some answers, tell me I will survive this, tell me how you did it. The answers were all different; the reassurances of parents who had lost their child and survived that first heartbreaking holiday were there. Some of the answers came from the newly bereaved as they explored their inner feelings.

We found consensus on one important factor: we must give ourselves permission to do what makes us most comfortable. We are not the caretakers to the world right now; we must take care of ourselves. If established traditions bother us, then we must turn to something else. What is the point of pouring salt into this open wound? Perhaps next year or the year after, when the wound is not so fresh, we will want to return to former traditions. Perhaps not.

Through tears and some light laughter, we realized that we are not invincible. We are not responsible for the happiness of friends and extended family. We do not have to meet the expectations of others. We must accept our emotional limitations and the psychological and physical toll that grief takes on us. We must slow down and change our perspective. We must do what is right for us, especially during the holidays.

Most of those who had been through at least one holiday season without their child felt that making changes for the first year or two was a positive step forward. We found that talking honestly with our family about our feelings might make them feel temporarily uncomfortable but it did clear the air about expectations. We agreed that limiting our casual social relationships negated the need to make explanations regarding our lack of interest in holiday celebrations. By "dropping out" we also eliminated obligations in many areas. This gives us the freedom to choose simplicity over stress, essentials over hassles and flexibility over anxiety. This gives us the opportunity to live in the moment, go where our emotions take us and listen to our hearts.

While we all agreed that the holidays are overwhelming for parents whose children have died, we also agreed that we are each individuals and we each perceive the world differently. Some of us want and need the old traditions during the holiday season. Some of us need to be with people who are not part of our grieving process. Others among us felt that solitude and simplicity were the answer.

The answer to the question of how we get through the holidays is found within each one of us. We each have our own truth. The challenge, we decided, is to honor that truth and hold the line against external pressures. A few of our newly bereaved parents could barely choke out a word or two. Others were more vocal. While grief consumes some of us for many, many years, others appear to "go with the flow" of life very early in their grief. What feels right for one of us may be abhorrent to someone else.

One universal truth did emerge from our conversations: we miss our beautiful children and love them as deeply as when they walked beside us. We live in this purgatory each day of the year, but during the holidays it seems most oppressive. Our children have been torn from our lives forever. Daily life and special traditions will always reflect the deep void that has become our reality. We need our Compassionate Friends at the holiday season. We need to know that others have walked this road, have lived this nightmare and have managed to survive. We each continue to rediscover hope through our Compassionate Friends. And in finding that hope we have given and received the purest gift of the season: the possibility of peace.

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

A LETTER TO MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season. It will be our first Christmas without our child and I have all I can do coping with the "spirit" of the holiday on the radio, TV, in the newspapers and stores. We do not feel joyous and trying to pretend this Christmas is going to be like the last will be impossible because we are missing one.

Our family traditions will be too painful for us to continue this year. Please understand this and maybe some Christmas in the future we will have these traditions again.

Please allow me to talk about my child, if I feel a need. Don't be uncomfortable with my tears. My heart is braking and the tears are a way of letting out my sadness.

I plan to do something special in memory of my child. Please recognize my need to do this in order to keep our memories alive. My fear is not that I'll forget, but that you will.

Please don't criticize me if I do something that you don't think is normal, I'm a different person now and it may take a long time before this different person reaches an acceptance of my child's death.

As I survive the stages of grief, I will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season.

Love, A Bereaved Parent, Madison, WI

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: _____

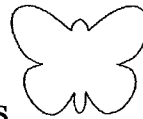
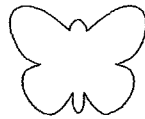
Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

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

"Butterflies are the heaven sent kisses of an angel." ~ Author Unknown

Butterfly decals are available to help personalize our trailer. The trailer is used to carry items to and from our Walk to Remember and other chapter events. It has also given us some visibility in the Fargo/Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our beloved children.

Butterflies are available in five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost is as follows: \$25 for 1 butterfly, \$50 for 2 butterflies, \$65 for 3 butterflies and \$80 for 4 butterflies. If you wish to purchase more than 4 butterflies please contact John Milligan at 701-491-0364.

Butterfly orders should include the child's first and last name (middle name is optional) and the 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.

"When our special sadness comes to call, when we remember more than we can bear, when courage falters – shadows everywhere: Then let us reach and touch and share, we, who are friends." ~ Sascha Wagner

Our Mom's group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fryn? Pan restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo. Our gatherings are very informal as we meet to talk about our children, books, recipes, jobs and whatever else comes up in conversation. We all have times when we need the listening heart of another mom or grandma. Please join us this month on Thursday December 22nd. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or sherylc13@msn.com.

Who Suffers More?

Suppose you had two jars from your supermarket that you wanted to re-use, but you need to remove their labels first. One of the jars has a pressure-sensitive label which peels right off without a trace of residue. The other one has a label that refuses to budge regardless of soaking, scraping or general pleading. The removal does not depend upon the qualities of the label or the jar. It is the kind of bonding that determines the kind of separation. Only the adhesive involved matters.

Neither the size of the label and jar, nor the length of time they have been joined together will determine how great a struggle there will be in separating the two from each other.

So it is with love and death. Therefore, let us always keep in mind as we experience our own separation pain that it is not relevant how old the child was who died -- we don't love our children more as they grow and develop. (Sometimes the more obscure label has the more tenacious bond!) The *only* measure of our grief is the intensity of our attachment.

Unbonding is not necessarily a visible or obvious process. Just as you cannot tell by looking at a jar whether its label is readily removable, you cannot tell just by looking at a parent how much suffering is caused by the unbonding process. For some parents the attachment is firm even before their children are born. For others it cements more totally with time.

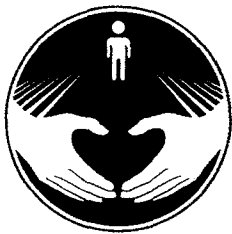
None of us can judge for another. We can only extend to others the same comfort, support and understanding that we hope to receive for ourselves. Remember, we're all rowing in the same storm, and we all intend the same destination: the safe harbor of healing and peace.

~ Andrea Gambill, TCF/Indianapolis, IN

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
OF THE F-M AREA
PO BOX 10686
FARGO ND 58106

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #1625
FARGO, ND

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**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 701-540-3287	Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287
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
- Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) 701-282-4083
- Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness) 701-730-0805
- Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage, son, 35-accident & son, 45-cancer)... 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.